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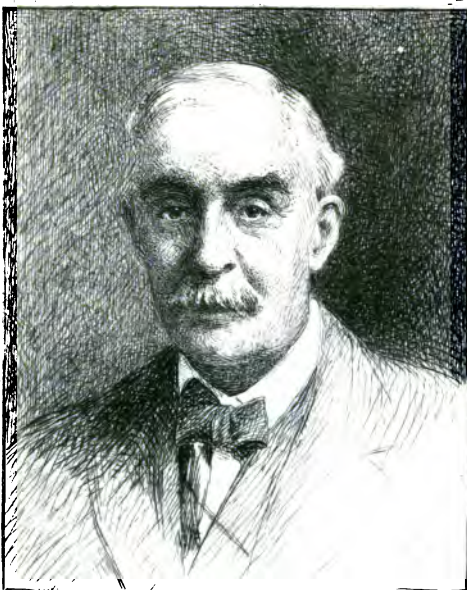
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RELIGIOUS GENIUS

RELIGIOUS GENIUS

BY

L. S.



LONDON

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

27 PATERNOSTER ROW

1905



11-6-39 J.A.

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED
TO THE LOYAL FRIEND
TO WHOSE HELP AND SYMPATHY
IT OWES AN UNTOLD DEBT
OF GRATITUDE.

INTRODUCTION

THIS volume has a twofold object. First, it deals with the nature of a certain well-known quality in religious life which it conceives of as *Genius*—Genius in the realm of religion, and akin to Genius in every other realm.

This view is based on the interpretation of *Genius* as primarily a *quality* or *kind* of power, rather than a *degree* of it; and it will greatly obviate difficulties in following the train of thought if it be borne in mind that throughout the book the word is used in *this* sense, and seldom, if ever, in its other acceptation, which denotes an extraordinary *degree* of original force and ability. And the reader is also asked to remember that it is not claimed for Religious Genius that it necessarily produces the grandest characters or the best specimens of virtue and power; this

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does not inevitably follow any more than that Genius in the spheres of art and literature always results in the highest attainments. It is well known that this best gift is often squandered and misused, and that powers of an inferior order, through industry and faithfulness, far outstrip it in the path of achievement and success.

This view—that a certain *type* of religious life and experience represents Religious *Genius*—is, as far as I know, a new one, and as such it is not likely to pass unchallenged. Moreover, I am well aware that, looked at superficially, such an idea might easily be dismissed as unjustifiable. I would nevertheless bespeak for it a deep and thorough consideration on the ground that it interprets religious phenomena that have remained inexplicable, and, because not understood, have been relegated by the majority of even thoughtful minds to the realm of emotionalism and superstition. These phenomena, however, refuse to be thus ignored, and press from time to time for an earnest, scientific inquiry into their true nature, and a recognition of their right place in the domain of

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religion. A pressure such as this is upon us in the present day. The Welsh Revival and other similar religious movements speak to us of an aspect of religious life that we would do well to try to understand—an aspect that (accompanied as it may be by much that is really foreign to its nature and fails to commend itself to our judgment) nevertheless presents certain unmistakable characteristics of Genius, such as spontaneity, enthusiasm, illumination, intuitive perception, and ~~power~~^{strength}.

The second object of these pages is to point out the deep underlying harmony and mutual support that exists between religious beliefs and theories that are supposed to be contradictory to, and destructive of, each other. When we get deep enough, these are seen to be but different aspects of a great and many-sided truth, each separate doctrine but a fragment of some universal doctrine, and all doctrines the complement of each other.

Thus, as we advance in knowledge and wisdom, far from discarding aught by which we have once lived and grown, we discover its true place and office in the infinite universe of Truth, which comes more clearly

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into view day by day. It is a constructive, not a destructive, process.

The faults and mistakes of the religiously-privileged class, dealt with in the following pages, are shown to be chiefly the outcome of a partial and limited view of religious truth which begets bigotry and all its attendant evils. The remedy prescribed is a steady advance into God's universal truth and life, and implicit obedience to every heavenly vision.

L. S.

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I

THE RELIGIOUSLY INSPIRED

CHAPTER I

THE RELIGIOUSLY INSPIRED

"There is genius as well in virtue as in intellect.

"Tis the doctrine of faith over works."—EMERSON.

"What is sanctity but the genius of the ethical realm."—
F. W. H. MYERS.

GENIUS is the phenomenon with which we are familiar in every department of human life and work. There is poetic genius, there is mathematical genius, commercial genius, inventive genius, and, like these in nature and office, there is religious genius.

An ultimate analysis of genius brings us to regard it as a *quality* of power, rather than a *degree* of it. Whether much or little in quantity, it is different *in kind* from all other power. It is to this view that we shall adhere throughout this volume.

What we mean by genius is *intuitive*

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power, perception, skill, as distinguished from that gained by experience, study, and the use of ordinary faculties. It is inspiration; and the deeds and utterances of genius are in a special sense Divine and superhuman.

All genius has equally its source in God, and is a special and, we may say, miraculous, effulgence of the light and life that are in Him. "Every good and perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights."

Let us, then, in entering upon this subject of Religious Genius, again emphasise the fact that it is like genius in every other realm, differing only in this, that it is the highest order of genius and the most beneficial to mankind.

It is necessary before going any farther to define as clearly as possible what we mean by the term "*religious* genius"; and here a difficulty meets us, for to apply the term in any broad and comprehensive sense, as it could well be applied, would be to take this book quite out of the limited range prescribed to it. We must therefore reconcile ourselves to narrowing it down, for the sake of clear-

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ness, to a very special and restricted application, which by no means covers the ground, but merely suffices for the purpose we have in view.

Religious Genius, then, let us describe as *intuitive* power to grasp the things of God, in a superhuman and miraculous way, as distinguished from the slow and plodding human methods of reaching up to the Divine life and light.

Men of the world, together with religious men who have no key in their own experience to this phenomenon,—while admitting the reality of every other kind of genius, even though they cannot understand how the inspiration is received, nor how it works,—are, with a strange inconsistency, often inclined to deny to religious genius the belief they unhesitatingly accord to the same miracle in the spheres of poetry, science, and art.

Nevertheless, the fact remains and must be reckoned with by all thinking minds, that the birth of religious genius in the soul is a very real and potent factor in the history of mankind, and one that cannot be ignored.

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This genius, like that of every other kind, ranges in quality and degree from the very highest order and fullest measure of inspiration to that which graduates down to the plane of ordinary and uninspired life. And here, too, as in all other departments of life and work, there is mere talent as distinguished from genius.

Having taken into consideration this fact of the existence of religious genius, and found it to be a phenomenon similar in its nature and working to that of all other genius, belonging to the same order in the Divine scheme, and governed by the same laws, let us turn to theology to find, as we would naturally expect to do, some account of this miracle and some doctrine concerning it, by which we may learn its scope and purpose. Here we are met with statements attested to by innumerable and trustworthy witnesses, that there comes to human souls a unique and supernormal experience which they term "the new birth," or "Conversion," or "Regeneration." Often it bursts upon the soul like a flood, sometimes it steals in gently like the dawn, now and again it is

ushered in by tempest and darkness; but whichever way it comes, it is characterised by certain unvarying results. One of these is that, at a bound, by an intuitive impulse, the soul reaches a point in its relations with God to which many years of previous effort and struggle had not brought it. A miracle has taken place! The heart that was alive to earthly things only has now been supernaturally quickened to perceive and love the spiritual, to see sights and hear strains of a new and heavenly kingdom; it has awakened on a new plane of existence, and begun a life of access to God by a royal road that it did not make for itself, but found ready—"a new and living way."

Though it is not our object to deal with any but religious genius, still we cannot but pause to notice how similar, almost to monotony, is the same experience in every realm of genius. Wagner wakes up one day to find himself a musician. In his case premonitions of coming power had not paved the way. In words which are commonly accepted as being autobiographical, he says, "I knew not what I was really intended for.

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I only remember that I heard a symphony of Beethoven one evening. After that I fell sick of a fever, and when I recovered I was a musician." The miracle was wrought and he knew not how! Dante, at the age of nine, sees the face of a little girl of eight, and he declares—"At that moment, I say most truly that the spirit of life, which hath its dwelling in the secretest chambers of the heart, began to beat so violently that the least pulses of my body shook therewith; and in trembling it said these words, 'Ecce deus fortior me, qui veniens dominabitur mihi'" (Here is a deity stronger than I; who coming shall rule over me). Paul, on his way to Damascus, sees a great light and hears the Divine challenge, and is forthwith a changed man—the whole current of his life suddenly, violently, and permanently turned in the opposite direction from that in which it had previously flowed.

One of the laws governing the birth of genius, especially of great genius, in every sphere, we notice to be, with a few rare exceptions, this: There are strivings, aspirations, honest, earnest endeavours, cheered by

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occasional premonitions of coming power, and yet the goal seems very far away until the supreme moment arrives ; and then suddenly the soul is there ! Caught up and carried in a chariot of fire over ground that the tired feet had so long tried to cover, and into the realms that seemed so inaccessible.

In the religious world, as in the literary world, the scientific and the commercial world, there are two classes of people—the inspired and the uninspired. J. Brierley, in a suggestive chapter on “The Religiously Ungifted,” touches on this question in the realm of religion ; and our experience verifies the fact that there are souls carried on the wings of inspiration over mountains of difficulty in the religious life, which other souls, just as worthy, are laboriously climbing. There is a passion for things spiritual and Divine miraculously implanted, living and growing in some, whilst others are painfully striving merely to remove the hindrances to the Godward movement of their hearts. Some are rejoicing in the *gift* of faith, of open spiritual vision, of God-consciousness and realisation, whilst their brethren grope in

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the twilight of human reasoning. These are facts, common occurrences all around us. Do we not know what it is to find a companion of many years suddenly changed. He says that he has been "converted," or has "received a new heart," or is "born again of the Spirit," or he expresses in some other of the many well-known theological phrases this strange experience. We find him changed *from within*—a natural, spontaneous Godward movement has begun in him, Divine impulses stir him, holy visions come to him, a power over sin and infirmity is accorded him that is different from, and far in excess of, the highest success he knew upon the uninspired plane. He does easily and naturally that which was once a difficulty; his religious life is now the result "not of a great effort, but of a great force." It is the dawn of religious *genius* in his soul; and whether the measure of that genius be large or small, it is in itself something unique, easily distinguishable from talent in its highest form, and may be described in the same language as genius in every other sphere.

Speaking broadly, there are two schools of

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religious thought in the Protestant Church to-day which represent these two kinds of religious life, one as admirable as the other, — the Evangelicals representing religious genius, the Anglicans standing as champions and advocates of strenuous effort and noble struggle in the realm of moral and spiritual progress. Let it be borne in mind that it is not the creeds nor theories of the two parties that are here referred to, for these doubtless include both aspects of religious life, but the animating *spirit*, the dominant principle, or genius, of each school, which tends, *on the whole*, with many exceptions and variations, in one or other of these two directions. Nor must we ignore the notable examples of religious genius in the Church of Rome, such as Madame Guyon, Catherine of Sienna, Francis of Assisi, Fénelon, and others. All these, using the different phraseology of their time, were baptized into the one Spirit, and stood for religious *inspiration*, for the attainment of spiritual life and power by faith, not by works ; by gift, not by effort or merit ; and had they lived in these days one cannot but conceive of them as naturally

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finding their home in the Evangelical system, while some so-called Evangelicals we could more fitly locate in the opposite school of theology, their whole tone of thought and trend of experience belonging thereto.

With regard to these two kinds of religious life, which for the sake of convenience let us designate the life of religious genius and the life of religious effort, we see that both are seeking to reach God, but by different roads; both are recognised and beloved by Him, both are blessed by Him—the one with illumination and inspiration, the other with what Phillips Brooks calls “the ennobling spirit of struggle.” Both methods of the Divine working are producing character, but of a totally different type. These two types may be described as being, in the one case, that of spiritual insight, or faith, resulting in a strange uplift and elation that gives wings to the soul, and carries it easily and quickly to its goal. In the other case the chief characteristic is strength of will and purpose, unremitting effort, perseverance, toil, by which the earnest soul marches slowly but surely towards God, overcoming difficulties,

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walking in a twilight illumined by faint and fitful gleams from on high, and exemplifying Matthew Arnold's noble words, that

"Tasks in hours of insight willed
Can be through hours of gloom fulfilled."

These two types of religious character are so perfectly the complement of the other that the one is incomplete without the other; nor can we fail to notice how those men who have had the advantage of training in both schools are the most symmetrical and perfect, combining spiritual insight and intuition with force of will and strenuousness of effort. Of these, Gladstone, Robertson of Brighton, and Phillips Brooks stand out as conspicuous examples.

With these facts before us, we may be confident that the purpose of the Divine mind is eventually to bring these two separate halves together and weld them into a glorious whole, wedding religious intuition and inspiration to religious effort and discipline. Doubtless it has been a necessary part of the Divine scheme to work out these differing characteristics of the two schools apart, before bringing them together. The separation, and even the

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antagonism between them, He has doubtless turned to good account, as is ever the way with the Divine Economist, using it to bring out more clearly and give stronger emphasis to the particular aspect of truth for which each party stands. Here, as elsewhere in nature, we also see Him working out His purpose in many parts and divers ways, which are destined eventually to meet and blend.

Surely there are already signs indicating that the gulf dividing these two different and necessary parts of the religious life is being bridged. In the growing fellowship and co-operation between them each is unconsciously contributing to the other and supplying its need. In the religious thought of each school we trace with delight the growing influences of the opposite school, and the younger men who stand forth as teachers and representatives on either side are increasingly, in spirit at least, the products not merely of the community to which they nominally belong, but of both. Thus are we encouraged to look for an ultimate reunion between these two great religious tendencies, which as truly

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belong to each other and complete each other as the woman does the man ; and the result of the union will be grand symmetrical character, rapid progress in holiness and power, the appearance among us of a new and diviner order of prophets, teachers, leaders, and the dawning of our high hopes for humanity. "The true romance which the world exists to realise will be the transformation of genius into practical power."

II
RELIGIOUS GENIUS AND
RELIGIOUS TALENT

II
RELIGIOUS GENIUS AND
RELIGIOUS TALENT



CHAPTER II

RELIGIOUS GENIUS AND RELIGIOUS TALENT

"The impulses of a man of genius come from life ; they are deep, rich, vital ; they rise out of the invisible depths of his consciousness as the unseen mists rise out of the mighty abyss of the sea. On the other hand, the impulses of a man of talent spring from skill, knowledge, the desire and profit of the moment."—H. W. MABIE.

"To do easily what is difficult for others is the mark of talent. To do what is impossible to talent is the mark of genius."—AMIEL.

IN the preceding chapter we have been considering two classes very easily distinguished from each other—the religiously inspired, and that large class which lacks the inspiration. We now purpose to deal with a third class, found in the domain of religion, as in that of poetry, literature, and art, which stands midway between these two, and which we may designate the *talented* class.

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There is a subtle, but very real, difference between genius and talent in whichever realm we find them, and not least in the realm of religion.

A clear definition of these two words—*Genius*—*Talent*—as they stand in our dictionary will best serve to bring out this distinction.

The word *Genius*, derived from the root *gen*, to *beget*, stands for *life*—it means something living, natural, spontaneous, something that moves and acts because of a principle of *life* within it; it is Inspiration—that is, an inbreathed life which dominates and disposes the whole organism according to its own laws. It is spirit as distinguished from form. It is heart-activity as differing from head-activity.

This is the meaning of the word *Genius*, and as applied to religion, art, or literature it signifies *life*, naturalness, spontaneity. In a primary sense this is still true whether the degree of life be small or great, though it must be admitted that the term has come to be generally associated in our minds with an unusual manifestation of original force. We

shall, however, in the ensuing pages adhere chiefly to the root-meaning of the word, using it merely to denote living, as opposed to mechanical, power and action.

In marked contrast to this word *Genius*, implying the highest form of vitality, is the other word *Talent*, which, coming from a root that means *a thing weighed*, stands for a weighted mind, a rich mental endowment. We speak of a "talented mind," but genius we always associate with the heart, and would smile to hear the phrase "a talented heart," while "a genial heart" sounds natural enough.

This distinction clears the way for what we purpose to say regarding these two classes in the religious world; and the reader, bearing in mind the primary meanings of the two words, will not misunderstand what follows.

In the domain of religion it is as difficult as in any other to trace the line of demarcation between genius and talent, which is often so fine,—the one seeming to merge into the other, and talent, in its highest form, appearing so like genius that the subtlest of

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minds can hardly detect the difference. The heart, however, can *feel* it, even when it defies intellectual analysis. Amiel, in his journal, gives an example of this very subtle difference, as manifested in preaching. Referring to a lecture by Ernest Naville, the great Genevese preacher, he says of it: "There was not a single reservation to make in the name of criticism, history or philosophy. It was all beautiful, noble, true, pure. It seems to me that Naville has improved in the art of speech during these latter years. He has always had a kind of dignified didactic beauty, but he has now added to it the contagious cordiality and warmth of feeling which complete the orator; he moves the whole man, beginning with the intellect, but finishing with the heart. He is now very near to true virile eloquence, and possesses one species of it indeed very nearly in perfection. He has arrived at the complete command of the resources of his own nature, at an adequate and masterly expression of himself. Such expression is the joy and glory of the oratorical artist as of every other. Naville is rapidly becoming a model in the

art of premeditated eloquence. There is another kind of eloquence—that which seems inspired, which finds, discovers, illuminates by bounds and flashes, which is born in the sight of the audience and transports it. Such is not Naville's kind."

This "other kind of eloquence" that Amiel refers to—are we not well acquainted with it in the sphere of religion? We know what it is to have been swept along on the wave of living emotion by a preacher whose speech and language were not such as to account for the effect produced. The words were poor, the delivery defective, the diction bad; and yet he stirred us to the depths, and touched us with a life-giving touch. It was *life* calling to life, and awakening responses in dim, far-off, slumbering recesses of the soul. It was a quickening! A resurrection trumpet-call bidding the spiritually dead arise from their graves and come forth.

This power in preaching, which is the direct result of genius in the preacher, we have constantly met with in varying degrees, from the simple, fervid, untutored utterances of the Salvation Army "lassie," to the eloquent

finished addresses of the great preacher, where genius, supplemented by culture and talent, has produced results that have astonished the world.

It is ever genius, or *life*, that is the most telling ; and men yield to its superior power even while they wonder and demur. In its simplest, least cultured form, it carries the heart by storm when the accomplished oratory of talent fails to do so. Such eloquence is an incoming of life, an inspired breath from the preacher's soul to ours, and nothing that lacks this living force (however great may be the learning, skill, thought, substituted for it) can do the same work : it cannot kindle life !

In our churches to-day these two kinds of preaching are found side by side—differing widely in aims, methods, and results. Let us distinguish them as the preaching of Genius and the preaching of Talent. Each aims at, and produces, results after its own kind. Religious genius—from its highest grade to its lowest—begets religious genius in others, in the degree proportionate to its power. Its object is to quicken the *heart* towards God, to cause it to be regenerated—

made to *live* again—raised from the spiritual death and torpor sin had produced, into life, and consciousness of life. It aims at making religion *natural*, a thing of the affections, the outcome of a vital relation to God, established by faith, and resulting in a new birth. It asks for *spontaneity* and *delight* in religious exercises and offices, amounting to exultation even in hardship and trial. Its ideal is a great enthusiastic devotion to God and His cause, from a heart to which it has become natural and delightful to choose to serve Him. It insists on a religion of love, rather than duty; of joyful impulses, rather than of painful effort; of faith, rather than works—valuing works only as an *outcome* of faith and love.

This teaching, in its zeal to attain its own peculiar end,—which is *heart-religion*,—deprecates all that it deems to be a hindrance to the reception of an inbreathed vitality. Conceiving mental activity, as applied to the quest for spiritual life, to be among these hindrances, it discourages, and often harshly denounces it. To this view of the case are due those frequently exaggerated, and

seemingly unreasonable, attacks against the exercise of reason and intellect, accompanied by urgent demands for passivity and receptivity, which are so common among a certain class of religious teachers. This attitude can so easily be misunderstood—indeed, those in whom it is strongest do not always comprehend or analyse it, but vaguely feel its truth and importance. Nevertheless, in *spirit* at least, though not altogether in its outward manifestations, it is right, and is based on a great fact—namely, that the intellect cannot cross the threshold of this innermost sanctuary of human life, nor give us the key to it, and must, in the end, submit to a higher power, following in the wake of the spirit if it would enter at all. And it is in order to maintain for the spirit its right in this its own domain, that the school of preachers just referred to contend against all usurpations of the intellect or reason. With equal energy they also combat the idea of morality as a passport to religion, reiterating the old battle-cry, as old as Paul—"Not by works of righteousness," "Not by works, lest any man should boast." And here too they are right. *Morality* is

not religion; and Matthew Arnold's definition that "Religion is morality touched with emotion," is a totally inadequate description. Far nearer the mark is another definition which affirms that "Religion is the relation man sets up between himself and the endless and infinite universe, or its source and first cause. Morality is the ever-present guide to life which results from that relation." This definition, making true morality—that is, morality which is not merely imitative or conventional, but *vital*—the result, and not the means, of attaining to religious life.

The advocates of this genius of religion—of spontaneous, natural spirituality—are a large class, made up of many elements of character and grades of society; a community the key-note of whose preaching may be found in phrases such as "regeneration," "new birth," "a new heart," "a new creation," and the like. They, consistently with their creed, believe in sudden conversions, in quick transitions, and in acquisitions of intuitive power.

The preaching and teaching of the Religiously Talented is on another plane entirely.

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It is studied and thought out, rather than natural, eloquence. Marvellously effective, logical, interesting; but its excellence is that of the head, rather than the heart; and its appeals also are to the head, rather than to the heart. It produces a religion which, like itself, is the result of studied and disciplined action of mind and will, rather than the spontaneous out-flowing from an inner spring of life.

Of this kind of religion we cannot speak too highly; the religion of genius needs to be supplemented by it. There is, as Phillips Brooks points out, a "*mind's* love for God," as well as a heart's; and we are bidden by the decalogue to love God with all the "*heart and mind.*" God demands the worship of this part of our nature as well as of the other, and only when both are given do we arrive at loving Him with *all* our strength.

This type of religion is indispensable, but it is not primary; it should follow, and not precede, the religion of the heart. In so doing it would find its highest perfection and power. In the foregoing chapter we have dwelt upon the wonderful results ensuing

from a combination of the insight and natural energy of genius with the efforts of the will and conscience; but when there is added to these the special mental ability and resource which we call "talent," the result may well be incalculable! The fact is that just as genius and "an infinite capacity for taking pains" are the complement of each other, so also genius and talent—the one pertaining to the heart and the other to the head, the one producing natural, spontaneous life, the other disciplined mental activity—are also the complement of each other; and perfection only is attained when each adds to itself the other: when, instead of the, alas! too frequent mutual dislike and distrust, they blend and co-operate; the religion of the mind stilling itself to wait for the birth of religious genius and welcome the inbreathings of the spirit *of life*; the religion of the heart seeking to acquire talent, intellectual vigour, and resource. It is a sad fact, however, that, as a general rule, in religion, as in art, each endeavours to stand and work without the other. Talent, strong and self-confident, forgets that there is a higher plane of power. Genius, conscious

of its transcendent worth, ignores talent. The heart and the head do not sufficiently unite their resources and activities.

Sir E. J. Poynter, President of the Royal Academy, gives an example of this. Whilst eulogising the genius of Mr. Whistler, he mentions the fact that he rarely studied ; and adds : "He was ultimately forced to paint, because he was a born painter and could not help it. Impatient of labour, however, his brilliant resources and his wit supplied him with admirable reasons for carrying his work no farther than his inclinations prompted and the art of leaving off when difficulties begin, is, I am afraid, the heritage of this gifted artist." This is an exact description of a similar danger in the sphere of religion. Emerson says, "The popular literary creed seems to be, 'I am a sublime genius: I ought not therefore to labour.'" All unconsciously, this certainly is the creed of many members of that religious community which emphasises the acquisition of spontaneous religious life. They have a tendency to ignore alike mental application, on the one hand, and honest toil on the other ; and

stand greatly in need of Emerson's exhortation, "Deserve thy genius : exalt it. Genius is the power to labour better and more availably."

We have been dealing hitherto with the preaching and teaching of these two classes which we have called the Religiously Inspired and the Religiously Talented. Let us turn now to consider how the same subtle difference exists in *life and action* as well as in preaching and teaching. It is life on totally different planes. Often, the toilsome, monotonous, unpicturesque existence of a common labourer exhibits all the traits of religious *genius*, in the midst of much that is crude and imperfect in his morals and manners ; while the perfectly disciplined life of a great preacher, despite its beautiful symmetry and culture, its well-considered and carefully practised virtue and charity, is an example simply of *talent* in the realm of religion—lacking the freshness and spontaneity that belong to the simple goodness of the labourer, and showing marks of toil and effort.

In closing let us notice that both types of

religion have morality as a goal, but the religion of genius requires that it be the outcome of an already kindled spiritual life; while Religious Talent regards it somewhat as a means to that end.

III

**THE PRIVILEGE OF THE
RELIGIOUSLY INSPIRED**



CHAPTER III

THE PRIVILEGE OF THE RELIGIOUSLY INSPIRED

"What's midnight doubt before the dayspring's Faith?"—
BROWNING.

"It is with Man's Soul as it was with Nature: the beginning of creation is—Light. Till the eye have vision, the whole members are in bonds. Divine moment! when over the tempest-tost Soul, as once over the wild-weltering Chaos, it is spoken: *Let there be Light!*"—CARLYLE.

SPEAKING of the Religiously Inspired, whom he terms "saints," Emerson says, "The privilege of this class is an access to the secrets and structure of Nature by some higher method than by experience"; and he refers to the philosophy of Immanuel Kant, which showed "that there was a very important class of ideas, or imperative forms, which did not come by experience, but through which experience was acquire^d—these were intuitions of the mind its

and he denominated them 'transcendental forms.'"

What is this "access to the secrets and structure of Nature" (and here let it be understood that with Emerson Nature is ever synonymous with God, the universe being to him an expression of the Divine life)? This access, akin to the poet's intuition and the artist's vision of beauty, is, in the saint, a revelation of God, a grasp of things spiritual and unseen pertaining to the Divine life. In the domain of religion he is the seer, the prophet, just as the artist and the poet are in their several spheres; and from this highest kingdom of God he rules as both king and priest over all the lesser kingdoms, and "all men are commanded by the saint."

Let us inquire a little into the nature of this unique privilege that is his—the privilege of looking into the deep unseen things pertaining to God and His relations with the world. What name can we give to this perceptive faculty? It is not Intellect or Reason, for these stop far short of such attainment. Nor is it Experience, for that has never yet touched the shining heights

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of the vision. What, then, can we name this power? The Bible calls it Faith, and in the Bible, as in all true theology, faith and vision are synonymous—"Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen." By faith, long before reason is able to perceive, or experience appropriate and realise, we stand on heights of moral and spiritual eminence. How we got there we can hardly tell. Surely we were borne thither by secret spirit agencies, awakening as from a dream to find ourselves there, "born again" into a new realm, placed on a new plane of existence; and we remember with awe those mysterious words of the Master, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh nor whither it goeth; so is every one that is born of the Spirit."

What an intense reality to the Religiously Inspired is this miraculous quickening of his spiritual nature, and of this high perceptive faculty! No wonder that he should speak of all the life that preceded it as a "death," a "sleep." No wonder that he can see no good for humanity save in a like quickening; and

that henceforth the keynote of all his utterances, by life and lip, should be, "Ye *must* be born again." With strange insistence and enthusiasm he proclaims this message from the depths of his inner life, often crudely, grotesquely, foolishly, and even harshly ; but how right the insistence and enthusiasm are the world has yet to see, through a growing realisation of the fact that no other method can replace or supersede this supreme and privileged one ; all others are but a preparation for this. The plodding effort to be religious, the painful mental strain to grasp and retain spiritual ideas, have their chief value in this, that they fit those who faithfully exercise these lesser powers in the sphere of religion to come presently into possession and use of a higher set of faculties, which are better fitted for and more delicately adjusted to their great work. For while the will, reason, and character, disciplined and educated by effort, are better able to use this great privilege when it comes, as it surely must to each earnest seeker, they cannot themselves do the work assigned by God to another department of the being, nor bring

the soul into intimate touch with spiritual verities. This is the office of the highest part of our tripartite nature. And when the blessed moment of illumination arrives, it will be instinctively recognised by the true seeker, in whom struggling and striving will give place to quiet receptivity as the life of God flows into the waiting soul with quickening, renewing, strengthening might; and ever after, that soul too will join the triumphant strain, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us." Each time this miracle is repeated what echoes it awakens in thousands of hearts rejoicing in a like deliverance from the drudgery of toil and effort that seemed to bring them no nearer to the goal of *natural, spontaneous* relations with God and His laws, to a love of them and delight in them! Oh! the rest to tired souls that has come with this blessed visitation of Divine life-giving power, when, ceasing from painful efforts of the reason and will, they have been borne on heavenly breezes, by wings of faith, into regions which the eye hath not seen!

Only those who have not had this experience can dare to discredit it; but they must remember that in discrediting the inflow, or quickening, of religious genius, the birth of *intuitive* religious life, they must also discredit the same phenomenon on other planes, and regard in the same way the birth of genius in the poet, the artist, the musician. And yet the works of these bear them witness, and who can resist such an array of facts? So also do those of the Religiously Inspired. He evidences that his whole heart has been changed by some secret alchemy, and that the life of God has flowed into it and become naturalised there; his being is in tune with the Divine and infinite; and the harmonies that result are such as the ear hath not heard—the natural ear of spiritually unawakened man.

The sad feature in this birth of religious genius is, alas! that the soul does not often press on to maintain the advantage it has gained, but rests, in many cases, on that one solitary initial experience that first ushered it into the realm of spiritual activity and vision. The first experience is not followed

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by other similar ones of greater glory and power, and so it loses its vividness; and the Church presents the spectacle of hundreds who have lived and traded so long on this one great spiritual event, which they call "conversion," as to have drained and exhausted it of its vigour.

Jesus said—in reply to the question of Nicodemus, "How can a man be born again?"—"Art thou a master in Israel and knowest not these things?" And one wonders at first what the connection can be between the fact of his being a master in Israel and the knowledge of this spiritual truth. Does it not, however, lie in this?—that Jesus implied that in speaking of the necessity of being born again, He was not referring to a new and unprecedented phenomenon, to be introduced into human experience for the first time through faith in Himself; but to something that ought to have been familiar to all teachers and leaders of the religious life—namely, the ascent of the spiritual consciousness through re-births on to higher and ever higher planes. And here we do well to emphasise the fact that one re-birth

into religious life, such for instance as is theologically termed "conversion," is not enough; it should be merely the precursor of others, and be followed by greater and more wonderful uplifts, each separating the soul in its experience (though not in its sympathy) from the previous plane more completely than the last, renewing the man more entirely, and producing an evolution in his spiritual nature ever more and more glorious.

There are some sections of the Christian Church that, in a small measure at least, take into account this doctrine of ascent into spirituality through a series of re-births. The Wesleyan teaching with regard to "the Second Blessing," the doctrine of "Holiness," or Sanctification by Faith, held by other portions of the Evangelical community, all alike set forth as real and definite and miraculous a re-birth as was the earlier one they called "conversion," and on which it followed. But, alas! they often stop here, and only a few venture through this portal into a still higher revelation and experience that puts the glory of these

into the shade, and in its turn becomes the stepping-stone to a yet higher and larger life; and so on, indefinitely, until the soul mounts up into the likeness of the Divine nature, and is "filled with all the fulness of God."

It is this progressive attitude of heart that the saint needs. He is in danger of taking up his abode upon the mountain height where first the vision came to him, instead of using it merely as a vantage ground from which to spy new heights. And yet, what glories await the progressive soul that fearlessly, yet reverently, moves forward in the march of spiritual life! How the horizon widens! New beauties appear at every step; tenderer, holier lights and shades play upon familiar objects of thought and feeling, transfiguring them; a growing inclusiveness thrusts out the hardening, narrowing exclusiveness of the past, and makes the heart great and wise and loving. Some harmonising, unifying principle is at work within; and, to quote from that great thinker, Emerson, "Each new step we take in thought reconciles twenty seemingly discordant facts." Pressing

on in religious experience, we find that "every ultimate fact is only the first of a new series, every general law is only the particular fact of some more general law, presently to disclose itself. There is no outside, no enclosing wall, no circumference to us. . . . Step by step we scale this mysterious ladder: the steps are actions, the prospect is power."

And as the soul goes on it gradually ceases to fear the periodically necessary readjustments and reconstructions of its beliefs, having learnt by experience to expect not loss, but only gain; and knowing that no vital principle, no doctrine by which the soul has once lived and grown, can die, though it change its form and place in that soul's universe a hundred times. F. D. Maurice said truly, "There must be a perpetual growth, but a growth that does not falsify any previous stage." Far from losing any quickening truth, it only becomes clearer and dearer as the Divine Spirit guides us "into all truth"; and as we find our cherished doctrines capable of being stated in terms not only of theology, but also of

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philosophy, science, and experience, they become increasingly beautiful and powerful.

Thus "the life that is an apprenticeship to truth," ever, as it ascends, builds its faith and religion on broader, deeper, stronger foundations than before, and raises on it a worthier structure day by day, saying, as it presses on :

"Build thee more stately mansions, O my soul,
While the swift seasons roll !
Leave thy low-vaulted past,
Let each new mansion, nobler than the last,
Shut out from heaven with dome more vast,
Till thou at length art free,
Leaving thine outgrown shell by life's unresting sea."

To define once more, in closing, the nature of this unique privilege of the religiously gifted, we would describe it as an access by a royal road to Divine life and power—a spiritual uplift not depending on human reasoning, or effort, or experience, but on inspiration. *Its office is to fit specially and speedily the recipient as a leader and pioneer in the domain of religion.* Freed from the necessity of toil and effort in realising God, granted the privilege of perceiving Him intuitively, and, thereby, the access to

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means of grace that facilitate rapid progress in holy character and thought and service, his life receives an impulse that other less-gifted lives lack. He starts from the vantage ground of privilege, and ought, therefore, ever to be the leader in the race, keeping ahead, and beckoning onwards, quickening duller perceptions with glorious visions of the spiritual realities and powers that await humanity; so that dragging footsteps hasten, and tired hearts revive, and latent powers spring up into waking life, "the wilderness blossoms as the rose," and the progress of mankind goes forward with mighty strides. This is his privilege and office!

IV

**THE INSPIRATION OF THE RE-
LIGIOUSLY INSPIRED**

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CHAPTER IV

THE INSPIRATION OF THE RELIGIOUSLY INSPIRED

"Inspirations which, could they be things
And stay with us, and we could hold them fast,
Were our good angels." LONGFELLOW.

℄ "Tis the most difficult of tasks to *keep*
Heights which the soul is competent to gain."
WORDSWORTH.

GENIUS should be normal, and this is specially true of religious genius. It is the rightful heritage of the whole human race, each member of which should possess the power to descend into the depths of his inner nature and bring forth from there, into the light of day, the treasures it contains. But comparatively few have as yet come into possession of their birthright. Meanwhile the poets, philosophers, saints, and men of genius in every sphere, stand as representatives

and prophecies of a power that is common to all. They are designed by God to be the pioneers of their race, leading it into possession and expression of its deeper life, to the infinite health and gladness of the world! Mr. F. W. H. Myers, in his work on "Human Personality," affirms, "The man of genius is for us the best type of the normal man, in so far as he effects a successful co-operation of an unusually large number of elements of his own personality, reaching a stage of integration slightly in advance of our own." Emerson says, "I hold that ecstasy will be found normal."

And, we would add, not only is genius the rightful, though, as yet, unclaimed heritage of all, but there is also another privilege which is equally ours if we will but claim and use it. Not only are we all endowed with a deep inner life, which is capable of being explored and expressed by ourselves, but we have also the privilege of *commanding, at will, our access to this life*, of descending into it, living in it, sending forth from it into the upper world streams of life and light. It is our right not only to come into conscious

possession of these higher faculties of our nature, but also to command and control and exercise them, drawing upon them whenever we need their aid, and finding them docile and obedient to our will.

How far removed is this condition of sovereignty and power from the ordinary experience of men of genius! who have habitually to deplore their impotence in this deeper realm, and their slavish dependence for inspiration on influences outside of themselves and not subject to their will nor obedient to their call.

Emerson, in his essay on "Inspiration," deals with this problem that has baffled gifted men of all ages—namely, the transitory and apparently arbitrary nature of inspiration—the strange sad fact that seasons of vision and uplift alternate with long periods of drought and barrenness. Can we, the philosopher asks, in any sense control or command the inspired mood, calling it to us at will? His answer, founded on human experience, is in the negative (though he clearly implies that this is not as it should be). Nevertheless, he points out several conditions favourable to

the reception and stimulus of the gift. There is, however, one condition which he does not mention, compared with which the others, useful as they are, seem superficial and external, and that is the need of *character*.

Why does the poet find his muse so fitful? Why does the saint, who preached in impassioned words on heights and depths of Divine mysteries yesterday, find, to-day, that the fire has died out, the vision has faded and he cannot invoke or command it, and must perforce continue his work without its aid? No wonder that the work is so uneven, so variable, such a combination of excellence and mediocrity, of wealth and poverty! Ah! simply this, that it was partly done in the power of inspiration and partly without.

What, then, is inspiration—not as it should be, namely, an uprush of the deep inherent powers of the soul itself in response to God's quickening touch, but as we commonly know it in human experience? It seems to be best described as a temporary *possession* of us by a power outside of, and apart from, ourselves; quite out of proportion to the normal development and scope of our spiritual faculties—

something lent us, in fact, for a while, poured into us, put upon us; but rarely, or at any rate very feebly, becoming *a part of ourselves*, and still less a *permanent* acquisition. This aspect of genius is powerfully depicted in a novel by Maxwell Grey called "The Silence of Dean Maitland," where the Dean is described as possessed and carried by this outside impulse; and under its influence he preaches, with burning eloquence and power, truths of which his whole life is a contradiction. This is an extreme case, but it describes what is to be found, in infinitely varying degrees, in the realm of genius. To quote from Emerson again, "All poets" (and this applies equally to the religiously gifted) "have signalised their consciousness of rare moments when they were superior to themselves—when a light, a freedom, a power came to them and lifted them to performances better than they could reach at other times, so that a religious poet once told me that he valued his poems not because they were his, but because they were not. He thought the angels had brought them to him. . . . The depth of the notes which we

accidentally sound on the strings of Nature is out of proportion to our taught and ascertained faculty."

Inspiration, then, is a blessed visitation from on high, sent, we believe, not to make us dependent on power outside ourselves, but to stimulate us and put us in possession and command of power *within* ourselves, latent in our own souls. F. W. H. Myers says, "The highest genius would be completest *self-possession*, the occupation and dominion of the whole organism by the profoundest elements of the self, which act from fullest knowledge and in the wisest way." It is for the purpose of revealing and educating these "profoundest elements of the self" that God descends, from time to time, into the silent, slumbering depths of the inner life of all, but chiefly and supremely of those chosen ones whom He has elected to be the pioneers and saviours of the race. He stirs, He illumines, He speaks; deep calleth unto deep; the spiritual life awakens for a while into conscious being and gives forth, in its waking moments, echoes of the Divine voice and reflections of the Divine

radiance. Then, alas! slumber overtakes it again, and all is still and silent till the heavenly visitant returns and gains a fresh admittance.

This is the ordinary history of the visitations of genius, and yet why should so welcome a guest be only a sojourner with us—coming and going so strangely and unaccountably? Why is it that—

“’Tis the most difficult of tasks to *keep*
Heights which the soul is competent to gain.”

Does not the answer lie in this—that there is no abiding place in us for aught so glorious, no suitable environment, no permanent welcome or response? Nor can there ever be until we have acquired the secret of *habitually* living in the Spirit, until we have come to be at home in this deeper region of our being—knowing, obeying, and delighting in its laws. To be spiritually minded is to have the passport to all power—the depth and intensity of the inner life being the exact measure of the genius exercised.

Here comes in that all-important question

—how to culture this spiritual life. Many answers have been given, and methods suggested; some of them good and useful, others foolish and harmful, but most of them totally inadequate. Conspicuous among the teachers on this subject are those who advocate, as a means to this high end, a withdrawal to the utmost possible extent from external interests, cares, pursuits, and pleasures in order to concentrate upon the spiritual. This method may be good, and even necessary, as a temporary measure, but its chief disadvantage lies in this—that what it gives in one direction it takes away in another, crippling instead of enriching the nature. Nevertheless, Jesus taught that it was “*better* to enter into life maimed” than miss its highest good. He did not say that it was *best*; His own life exemplified a completer method.

The objection just mentioned applies to most of the other theories advanced. There is one way, however, of acquiring the habit of living perpetually in the Spirit, and, thereby, of continuously exercising the power of inspiration, which is at once wholesome

and natural and beautiful. It is certainly the most important and effective method, and may possibly prove to be the only *necessary* one, since it alone appears to have been the means employed by the Divine Master Himself in the days of His earthly limitations; therefore it is with this that we purpose to deal.

The chief characteristic of this method we find to be its demand upon *character*. It requires of us that we *realise our ideals*, and that, not only in art, but also, and primarily, in life and action—making objectively real and actual that which we have subjectively seen and heard. In opposition to the theory that advocates the suppression of our nature on the objective plane, this method honours it, and demands rather that it be transfigured, spiritualised, inundated by the life welling up from within—every act, every relationship, association, and transaction permeated and leavened with the life of the Spirit; and, by it, lifted on to a spiritual plane, there to become its true helpmeet and medium of its expression and manifestation.

Alas! how rarely is this method of gaining

an end so ardently desired, perseveringly and whole-heartedly adopted! and so we are unable to gauge the true measure of the success it enfolds and promises. Look at the life of the philosopher, the poet, the saint. What lack of nobility it often exhibits, what deficiency of love and generosity! How disappointingly unlike is the character from the word spoken, the thought expressed! It is very evident that a different being lived the life from the one that wrote the poem or gave the impassioned sermon;—the one had its source in a poor feeble human character; the other came by the Spirit of God. Only when the poet has learnt to live his poem, the preacher to become the embodiment of his sermon, the incarnation of the principles and visions he declares; only then will inspiration come to these gifted ones to *stay* with them and place itself at their command. Then, not only will its permanence and control be secured, but the way will be opened for an ever richer inflow of the Divine life. In proportion to the response we can give it, the capacity we have created and the home we have made for it, will God's quickening

energy come to abide with us and awaken our own inner being into a marvellous activity and the utmost self-possession of genius. If each gifted soul that has been lifted for a moment into the realm of high and holy things would seek to work out in his character, as well as in his art, the pattern shown him in the Mount,—planting the foot of personal appropriation and possession on all the territory of beauty he has seen, laying the emphasis on *being* even more than on *doing*, and working out the truth in deeds and noble self-restraint,—he would speedily rise to higher and higher levels of genius. No longer would inspiration be something outside of him, apart from him, merely lent him for a season and for a temporary purpose, but it would be woven into his innermost being ; it would become he, and he it, inseparably one, and unfailingly powerful. When *character* is thus relied on for inspiration rather than external and artificial aids (and we would here suggest that much of the fervent praying by which religious leaders work themselves into states of emotional exaltation partakes of the nature of an outside

stimulus), then only will we begin to draw our inspiration and power from a deep perennial fount within ourselves, placed there by God Himself, who, in this particular as in all others, created us after the Divine likeness, and is ever seeking to bring forth that likeness in the deepest part of our nature.

The object, then, as we have already pointed out, of the religiously gifted should be to live the life of which they have caught glimpses in seasons of uplift and vision, to work it out faithfully and patiently, remembering that their power to impart it to others, as well as their ability to keep the light burning in their own souls, depends on personal appropriation and practical use of the Divine gift. How many who have failed to do this will sorrowfully endorse the following words of the great Phillips Brooks: "Spiritual life, light, vision, richness—soon the great light unused has faded away and left the soul in darkness. Soon peace which was not vitalised to power has decayed to pride. They prove their reality by what they can make you strong to do. If you lift your head, if you put out

your hand and take your task which is certainly waiting for you, then instantly your high emotions will know their place. They turn themselves into motives. No cloud can hide them from you, no Satan's hand can rob them from you, for they have entered in through the open door of your will, and have become a true part of you. If there are any of you, dear friends, to whom, by the kind grace of God, peace, faith, vision are thus rich and real, I beg of you bestir yourselves, and make them yours for ever by doing some hard duty in their strength. That is the only way to keep them. Let no spiritual exaltation come to you without your lifting yourself up into its *present power*, and doing some great work for God which in your weaker moments and lower moods has scared you with its difficulty. For duty is the only tabernacle within which a man can always make his home upon the transfiguration mount."

This is indeed a noble ideal for the religiously gifted soul; but before he can realise it he must learn to sacrifice all lesser things to goodness and truth—yea, even to

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make knowledge, art, fame, and success subservient to this great aim. Keeping his soul from spot or stain, exercising his will in making right choices, he must ever seek, by patiently building up noble qualities, to become the incarnation of his visions of glory and beauty. Then will full and abiding inspiration be his, and rich and inexhaustible power of expression by life and lip.

With this character, which alone can be the earthly home and unfailing fount of inspiration, we propose to deal in the next two chapters.

V

**THE NEED OF THE RELIGIOUSLY
INSPIRED**



CHAPTER V

THE NEED OF THE RELIGIOUSLY INSPIRED

"Man is satisfied only with what satisfies his soul,—only with character, and with an endless chance for that character to grow."—PHILLIPS BROOKS.

"Be true to the best of yourself, living up to your nature."—MARCUS AURELIUS.

"We do not reach spirituality of character by spasmodic, unnatural efforts to crush the nature, but by patient care to develop and disengage it from evil."—F. W. ROBERTSON.

BEFORE we go on to speak of the special character which the world demands of the Religiously Inspired, let us define clearly what we mean by *character*.

We can hardly do better perhaps than take Emerson's definition: "The face that character wears to me is self-sufficingness. Character is centrality, the impossibility of being displaced or overset. . . . Character is nature in its highest form."

It will be seen at a glance that this view

of character is directly opposed to the theories of some deeply religious people on the subject; indeed, there is a whole school of religious thought which in its teaching tends to weaken character, regarding it as an evil to be fought against and eradicated! It deprecates self-sufficingness as an insult to God, and advocates an attitude of heart and mind in which every virtue shall be regarded wholly as a gift from above, and something entirely apart from the human nature in which it is manifested. Man's personality becomes merely a casket (and the more inert and passive it can be the better) to hold the jewels of God's strength, love, wisdom, and beauty, these qualities being in no sense the man's own possession; indeed, he vehemently disclaims all share in them, saying, "Nothing is mine—neither the patience I display, nor the courage, nor the unselfishness; all is God's alone, and comes from Him."

Very different is this view of the case from that taken by Phillips Brooks, who regarded human nature "as having some Divine root, some potency in itself worthy of its origin from God," and insisted that in the culture

of noble character God and man were partners, each doing his share of the work.

There is, however, a deep truth underlying this repudiation of human merit; but it is only half the truth. Undoubtedly in the initial stage of the religiously inspired life all virtue bears the aspect of being due to an outside influence, possessing, constraining, empowering its recipient to be and to do that for which he has as yet no inherent ability. There is an exact parallel to this phase of religious experience in the provision parents make for a young and helpless child, entirely undertaking for it, carrying, feeding, protecting it, without any co-operation, save receptivity, on its own part. This, however, is not a permanent condition in the natural life, nor is it meant to be in the religious life. It is only the initial or beginning stage, a condescension to our weakness, and to be followed by an education of strength, will, and virtue *in ourselves*. The great mistake made by those who have known this happy experience pertaining to spiritual infancy, and seen it result in growth and prosperity, is that they would fain stop there for ever!

But this is impossible, for the kind of dependence which in childhood is natural and beautiful becomes in maturer life detrimental and evil. The child must go on to full growth; and full growth does not bring independence of God, but dependence on Him in a new way, and for benefits other than those needed by helpless infancy.

During the early stages of the newly awakened spiritual life God adapts His ministrations to its weak and helpless condition. At a later stage He seeks (just as earthly parents do in obedience to an impulse derived from Him) to teach those whom He once carried, to walk, training them to exercise divinely given faculties and powers, to become self-reliant and intelligent. The child does not cease to depend on the parent, the only difference is that the dependence has changed its form. Whereas in earlier days it was a dependence for support and protection, it is now a dependence for the higher blessing of education and training. Under the parents' guidance the child becomes wise and self-supporting; and the strong, disciplined life of manhood is a

greater honour to the parent than that of helpless infancy.

This is a truth that a large and influential religious community has yet to face and understand. It has to see that there is no contradiction between the possession of character, centrality, self-sufficingness, and the most humble and absolute dependence upon God; the dependence merely changing its form as the soul grows and progresses, and becoming at each stage deeper and completer—assuming the aspect of dependence for character more than for support. God is still the Father, and, however rapid our growth, He is always high above us and we never cease to need Him, though our needs change in character as we advance. Seeing this, we shall come to reconcile apparently conflicting truths, and find that, while looked at from one point of view, it is undoubtedly true that all goodness is God's gift,

“And every virtue we possess,
And every victory won,
And every thought of holiness
Are His alone,”

yet from another standpoint we are face

to face with the necessity of working out our own salvation and the Divine command to do so.

But the meeting-point of these two seemingly opposite doctrines of faith and works is not far to seek—the truth is that it is ever God and God alone who initiates, but we who co-operate. It is a joint work—His and ours, He leading and revealing, we following and obeying; and this is true not only of the first, but of every subsequent step in moral and spiritual evolution.

God's great aim—and we cannot too emphatically state it—is to produce *character*; all other aims and methods in His scheme are introductory to this and preparations for the school in which *character* is educated. God has a great enthusiasm for human character. He, the Divine Father, desires to impart to His children His own character as a power within themselves, incorporated with their being, woven into it—inalienably theirs—part of them and they of it.

This is God's ideal for the saint, and the climax whereunto all earlier experiences are tending. Patiently and tenderly He brings

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His trusting children through childhood to maturity, removing one by one the props on which they rest, and, for the power that used to come upon them and bear them on eagle's wings, substituting the power that comes into them and results in character.

God's will for the souls He is leading and teaching is that they reach a point in their progress where they come into harmony with nature—*their own nature* as renewed, disciplined, and purified by obedience and faith. He would have them at last dare to be themselves and trust themselves—sure that in so doing they are trusting Him who made their nature in His own image and likeness for the purpose of expressing Himself.

There can be no greater reward for the obedient soul that has maintained its quest for the highest through all the preparatory discipline of loss and pain, than to reach at last this point, and see the dawning fulfilment of Christ's gracious promise, "He that loseth his life shall find it." That fulfilment begins on earth! It begins as soon as the point of entire surrender to the will of God has

been attained. When wilful self-assertion and rebellion against Divine authority and law have been purged away, then God begins to teach the soul that had laid down its life, and seemed for a while to lose it, how, once more, to "find" it, and under His continual guidance and inspiration to thread the way back to its own essential nature, and dare to be true to that nature.

How difficult a process this is can be realised only by those who have come to see the amazing extent to which each human being has been overlaid with traditions and conventionalities, religious and social, until a second and artificial nature has been built up around the real, through which it is very difficult to trace the original design of the heavenly artist. Yet the design is there; and God will help every true heart to find the Divine plan for its own life and character, and build thereon, bravely removing injurious and foreign elements that have gathered round it, and instinctively finding and appropriating those which are truly its own. Here alone lies strength in virtue or in action. Only the natural and spontaneous

are strong. We have attached a secondary meaning to the term "character," making it to stand for virtue; but, derived from a word implying *to cut or engrave*, its primary sense is that of *a distinctive mark*, and its truest application is to those "peculiar qualities impressed by nature or habit on a person which distinguish him from others." Therefore, "Character is nature in its highest form"; and it is to this character, or nature, that God would fain bring us back. Sin and weakness have turned us aside from following it; but now He seeks to set our feet once more upon the right track. Perversion and pollution had marred it at its source; but for this too He has a remedy which can purify, restore, and reinstate human nature, or character, once more making it a safe guide, yea, a "candle of the Lord"! Thus led on from strength to strength we shall discover the genius and usefulness that await us on this path.

But the obstacles are numerous and formidable! "The fear of man which bringeth a snare" crushes back all spontaneity and originality of thought and

action ; each community, religious, social, and domestic, tends to melt down all its members and pour them into a common mould. Character is ground down to a dull, dead level, a monotonous similarity is aimed at in each circle, and, alas ! frequently achieved.

Nevertheless, God is working to break up this uniformity, and bring out human characters in all their striking and infinite variety of beauty and strength. The work is difficult and tedious, because no ordinary degree of courage is needed to throw off the yoke of weak compliance to traditions, customs, and opinions that war against the soul, and to face the suspicion and persecution that must be encountered by truth and loyalty to nature.

Truly there is much to contend against ; for not only does the fear of man's scorn and disapproval bar the way, but an even greater fear—the fear of error—scares back many who would otherwise progress in the attainment of character. In some large and influential sections of the religious world this curious suspicion and distrust of character is a special feature ; and to the teaching and

attitude with regard to it may be attributed the fact that weakness of character and intensity of religious feeling are so often found going hand in hand. The reason is obvious and can be traced to certain doctrines and dogmas which, sharing our human limitations, are but fragments and partial aspects of the truth. These, when adhered to exclusively, without reference to other truths that complete and balance them, must of necessity produce a one-sided development of the religious life. The doctrine, for instance, of the fall, and deeply rooted depravity of human nature, as taught by the Church, has created a great distrust of all that is human and natural, setting forth its repression as the only method of dealing with what is regarded as a hindrance to holiness. Obviously such a view stands seriously in the way of character-building.

However, God's resources are infinite; and to meet this doctrine, which, though based on a deep and fundamental truth, has been perverted from its use by a mistaken emphasis, He has brought about a reaction, and caused to spring forth from the very heart and home

of the dogma of human depravity a counter-acting influence, a doctrine calculated to set us free once more to trust our nature, and follow it.

The doctrine here referred to, commonly known as "Holiness" or "Sanctification by Faith," is the one so specially associated with Wesley, who rescued it from obscurity and made it the means of a great spiritual uplift all over the land. As set forth by him and his followers, it became a great remedial force, meeting with a message of hope and cheer the depression bred in almost all religious communities by a distorted and exaggerated representation of the irremediable depravity of human nature, the result of which representation had been to paralyse the Church's efforts after a high standard of conformity to Christ.

The trumpet-call of Wesley, when traced to its source, was really a call back to nature, a call to the human heart to be once more at peace with itself. He taught that human nature may be purified at its fount by the atoning efficacy of Christ; and, that ever-haunting fear of a "sinful bias," an "evil

principle," being removed, fallen man may be reinstated and become again the helpmeet and coadjutor of God in working out Christian perfection in himself and others.

This doctrine, as may well be conceived, became to many the portal into a larger, richer, deeper life—giving, as it did, a satisfactory basis for the removal of a paralysing and morbid self-suspicion and distrust. The doctrine stated simply stands thus—that fallen human nature may, by a second miraculous and spiritual re-birth, become purified in its innermost springs and not merely in external deeds and words, thereby being set free to trust itself.

"Character is centrality, the impossibility of being displaced or overset." There is a great deal in that short sentence. It does not mean that the man of character has knowledge and ability in all arts and sciences and walks of life, but it does mean that there is in him a certain set of qualities that enables him to cope with and master any circumstances in which he may find himself placed; he is equal to all occasions. Will, determination, concentration, perseverance, and, above

all faith, these are the qualities which he can bring to bear at any moment upon every task that lies before him. He is "victory-organised"! He will patiently solve all the problems of life and duty that meet him. He will strenuously work his way through hosts of difficulties, armies of obstacles, his courage rising superior to all disasters and calamities, his faith standing the severest tests, and growing stronger thereby, his hope shining on through the gloom. If he should find himself on a desert island, or in the palace of a king, he will in each case be equal to the occasion, all those qualities that go to make up character coming to his aid, disposing of difficulties and discovering resources.

This is what we conceive of as character, or rather as the result of character; and it is this character that is the great need of the Religiously Inspired. What more desirable than that the man of faith and vision become also the man of character in every sphere of his life and action, combining in himself these two great types of human life—the one balancing and strengthening the other,

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and bringing human nature to its perfection ; and by none is this ideal more easily attainable than by him, blessed as he is with the uplifting power of faith and vision ! The grand work God seeks to do in each religiously inspired life is to add to it *character*—*glorious* character ! As the soul yields to Him He will bring it out of helplessness and weakness into spiritual maturity, quickening its faculties, training its powers, teaching it the secret of effective and whole-hearted co-operation with the Divine working, kindling and maintaining in it a noble strife against evil. How honouring to the Divine Teacher when a human being, standing forth in a growing likeness to His own symmetry and beauty, proclaims, “ I owe this to God. Who teacheth like Him ! ”

VI
THE HOPE OF THE RELIGIOUSLY
INSPIRED

CHAPTER VI

THE HOPE OF THE RELIGIOUSLY INSPIRED

"Christ in you, the hope of glory : whom we proclaim,
admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom,
that we may present every man perfect in Christ."

ST. PAUL (Col. i. 27, 28).

"Draw if thou canst the mystic line
Severing rightly His from thine,—
Which is human, which Divine."

EMERSON.

"Why ever make man's good distinct from God's,
Or finding they are one, why dare mistrust?"

BROWNING.

HUMAN life may be an art—yea, a *fine* art; and the finest of fine arts! It is the art to which all other arts—music, painting, poetry—have been for centuries contributing, ministering, and converging. It is the supreme art! For the perfecting of the art of human living the world waits and yearns; in its progress is the world's hope.

"The earnest expectation of the creation waiteth for the revealing of the sons of God" in the glory of Godlike character. Poet, painter, and artist exist to train mankind up to this most glorious art of all! When human life stands forth a work of art—God's highest, noblest art—the choirs of heaven will chant its epiphany, and earth will take up and echo the strain; "the mountains and hills shall break forth into singing, and the trees of the field shall clap their hands"; and the Divine Artist, looking down, will say of His handiwork, as in the earliest dawn of human history, that it is "very good."

The time is coming slowly, very slowly, but surely, when a glorified humanity shall move as kings and priests upon God's earth, setting forth "the praises of Him who called us by His grace," and came to us as a representative and prophecy of the coming glory of the race. Surely there are dim, far-off signs of that dawning glory. Many a poet and prophet and saint perceives it with the eye of faith, and exultantly exclaims, with Whittier:

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“The airs of heaven blow o’er me;
A glory shines before me
Of what mankind shall be,—
Pure, generous, brave, and free.
I feel the earth move sunward,
I join the great march onward,
And take by faith, while living,
My freehold of thanksgiving.”

Meanwhile, “until the day dawn and the day star arise” in the heart of humanity, God has ordained it to rise in individual hearts and lives. These He sends forth as pioneers and prophets to lighten the darkness and proclaim the good news—the gospel of a great salvation. Foremost among these sent and chosen ones are the saints; and they—“called to be saints,” elected as forerunners and prophecies of the universal sainthood, “predestined” by God “to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He may be the firstborn among many brethren,”—stand forth in His plan as vivid representations and samples of that whereunto He purposes to lead the race. They are meant to be realised ideals of human strength and beauty; “the firstborn”—the first translated in point of time—to a higher plane of spiritual life, to be beacon lights and beckoning hands to those who shall be the

spiritually later-born: they are "a kind of first-fruits"—an earnest of the coming harvest.

Oh the glory of this calling! When shall the full dignity of it dawn upon these specially chosen and illumined ones? When shall the burning conviction that they are "elect . . . to sanctification of the spirit, unto obedience," possess them and urge them towards the goal? Oh for a great flood-tide of enthusiasm to carry them far out upon the ocean of the ideal life—to break them away from the old moorings of limiting unbelief, and set them free in an illimitable expanse of as yet unexplored possibilities—possibilities of likeness to the great human Representative and Ideal. Oh for a new genius!—*a genius for holy living*, when the saint shall become a poem of God's making, a picture of God's painting; an oration, a song through which the music of heaven may reach us; a living, walking expression of the Great Artist's fairest, highest thought.

Ever and anon there gleams upon us through the shadows a glorious picture of the life and character of sainthood as it should

be—as it may be—yea, as it may be even here and now ! Why do we not always believe in the possibility of such a life ? Why have we let theology and tradition rob us of this transcendent aim—persuading us that all hope of attainment “unto a full-grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ,” in our earthly life, is a presumptuous illusion ? Surely, surely the Master said not so. Nor did St. Paul, who, to use his own words, described himself as labouring unwearyingly “till Christ be formed in you.” “Christ in you, the hope of glory : whom we proclaim, admonishing every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ.”

When Jesus came amongst us nineteen centuries ago, was it not His *earthly* glory only that He showed us ?—the glory of a life and character that was possible under the conditions and limitations of the present, and to which He referred in the words of His high-priestly prayer as something already shared with us, saying to His Father, “The glory which Thou gavest Me I *have* given them.” The *future* glory He veiled ; with

supreme wisdom reserving the vision of *heavenly* character till its time should come; forbearing to dwell on human strength and love and beauty as it shall be hereafter under the conditions of a new environment, and in the light of the new truths and ideals that await us. He told us only of what was possible *on earth*, and became to us, in His own life and example, a representation of human attainment under *present* circumstances, saying, "The works that I do ye shall do also, and greater works than these shall ye do, because I go unto My Father," and hinting at the possibility of a close resemblance to Himself in the words, "The disciple, when he is perfected, shall be as His Master." We cannot conceive of the Great Teacher mocking us by giving us, as our example and standard, a life that was not possible to us.

What a strange unreasoning fear it is that possesses the Church of Christ—a fear lest His followers, by becoming too like Him, should detract from His honour and glory! Surely such a fear would vanish could we but recognise that Christ has a *new* revelation

of Himself to give us when we reach the other world—of Himself under the higher conditions of the heavenly life, looking forward to the glory of which He prayed, “Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory.” The one glory—that of earthly attainment—He has already shared with us, and left us as a legacy; the other glory He waits to share. Surely we need not fear but that He will ever be far above us as He leads us on from one plane of character to another, higher and higher, going ahead “to prepare a place,” and then coming again to receive us unto Himself—the spiritual significance of the parable being that He will undoubtedly bring us, on each plane, to where He Himself has been, and that what was possible to Him is possible to us. We shall “follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth.”

Sad indeed is it that theology has placed so great a distance between Christ and the humanity He came to redeem and uplift, making His beautiful life and example of none effect through the tradition which

pronounces a like attainment impossible to us this side the grave. This, more than anything else, has paralysed religious effort, and lowered its standard of character. The Church now awaits a restoration of the supreme hope of Christianity, which is "Christ in you, the hope of glory"—present glory as well as future—the glory of a wealth of Christlike character here and now, in which the Master, seeing of "the travail of His soul," shall be satisfied. Away with unbelief! We *must* be, we *shall* be like Christ. He came to make us so. Away with timid excuses and fears! Let us take our great Model, and with new hope and joy set Him before us as indeed our standard for the life that now is, claiming His promised Spirit of power, and regarding His victory as the earnest of ours. Let us have done with crude thoughts of a half-salvation—a partial redemption for the earthly life. Jesus came to save it and exalt it wholly! Creeds and doctrines and dogmas: "they have taken away our Lord, and we know not where they have laid Him"—a dead Christ entombed in tradition. Oh why has He been

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removed afar off from us! It is the lament of humanity going up to the throne of the Father. The example of Christ's life has lost its power, because of the great gulf theology has placed between that life and ours, teaching that, at its best, our earthly life can never be anything but a dim, far-off likeness of His—a likeness amounting almost to a caricature! Yet *He* said not so!

We look for a new race of seers and prophets who shall restore to us a living, breathing, effective Christ—the Christ of earthly history, of human experiences and limitations, of human triumphs—the intelligible, communicable Christ; *our* Christ, our elder brother—"the first-born among many brethren."

"Closer is He than breathing,
Nearer than hands and feet."

Traversing intervening deserts of dogma and tradition, we will hail Him as the Captain of our salvation come to make us "more than conquerors" in the earthly strife, to teach us how to overcome, even as He also overcame.

A perfect Saviour! That is what the Church calls Christ; and yet it sees no inconsistency in contemplating a failure on His part to save us "to the uttermost," under the conditions of the earthly life, from the devastating influences that belong to this plane, and to no other,—influences which we shall not encounter again elsewhere, and which, unless we overcome them here and now, must be regarded as having triumphed over us. However great may be our conquests on any subsequent plane of existence, when we shall have put off our mortal body, on this plane at least we shall have been worsted. And in our defeat is implied that of our Saviour. We gauge the worth of a workman by the quality of the work he can produce; so, we must judge of the perfection of Jesus as *Saviour* by the success of His saving work. If, however, He cannot fully save us and make us like Himself under the existing earth-conditions, but must needs wait for some easier ones, He cannot be said to have brought His saving work to perfection, and the inevitable conclusion is that "the present evil world" has proved too strong for Him.

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So while we still laud Him as perfect Friend, Guide, Teacher, Helper,—we must qualify our praises of His Saviourhood.

This is where a good deal of the present-day popular theology, logically followed out, brings us. But it is not the gospel of Christ. Jesus said, “Be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world”; “He that overcometh I will give to him to sit down with Me in My throne, as I also overcame, and sat down with My Father in His throne.”

Theological unbelief has been for centuries past “limiting the Holy One of Israel” and delaying His purpose. This purpose, as indicated again and again in the inspired Word, has been to persuade the world of His ability to save and exalt mankind through Christ by setting forth samples of His redeeming power in an elect band of specially favoured ones who are the first-fruits of that power, and its appointed mediums.

This was destined to be the high calling and privilege of the Religiously Inspired, and the object with which their gift of inspiration was bestowed. The Church has submitted to the dictum that nothing better than a faint

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resemblance to Christ is possible this side the grave; and has yielded up its strenuous and hopeful pursuit of the high ideal, substituting, instead, a listless, half-hearted quest of some inferior attainment. Very greatly needed, then, are those who have in any degree become participators in the *genius* of religion. They are God's appointed agents for the demonstration of His saving power, forerunners sent by Him to carry the good tidings, and to present in themselves samples of the glorious redemption that awaits humanity at large.

“That ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe”; this fervent desire of St. Paul's for his Ephesian converts echoes down the centuries and becomes our earnest longing too. Oh that the religiously gifted of the present day would lay hold of the great hope of Christianity—the hope of likeness to Christ upon earth—and proclaim it by life and lip!

VII
THE MODEL OF THE RELIGIOUSLY
INSPIRED

CHAPTER VII

THE MODEL OF THE RELIGIOUSLY INSPIRED

"Nothing human is seen disproportionately in Christ, and nothing which belongs to human perfection fails to find a place in Him . . . this universality of Christ's character is no speculative fancy of the scholar."—DR. WESTCOTT.

"The revelation in Christ is the revelation of normal rule for the development of human life."—W. BOYD CARPENTER.

SAINTHOOD is the highest calling of man, the noblest type of human life: it is genius on the most exalted plane. No wonder, then, that the demand the world makes on the saint should be enormous! There is an intuitive justice in the intolerance shown towards imperfections in him that are passed over in others. With such unparalleled advantages and privileges as his they should not exist.

Of saints Emerson says, "This class is the aim of creation, the other classes are admitted

to the feast of being only in the train of this." The ultimate destiny of mankind is sainthood, and towards this all other gifts and callings converge. The world shall one day be full of poet-saints, soldier-saints, scientist-saints, artisan-saints—but it is sainthood that is the goal of all: it is the primary object, and every other calling is secondary; it is essential, and everything else is subordinate.

Having dealt in the preceding chapter with character—or the trueness of each nature to its original design and intention—as the great need of the saint, let us now consider the special type of character with which, by tacit consent, the world and the Church invest their ideal of the saint. Its chief feature we find to be *holiness*, and by this holiness is meant *wholeness*, soundness, symmetry. A great deal more is involved in the term "holy," as applied to the saint, than the merely negative virtues of absence of sin and impurity. The ideal rightly includes the positive aspect of holiness, which is health and completeness. Hence the common expectation (alas! so often disappointed) that the saint will be found equal to all demands and

emergencies, and may be relied on for sympathy, succour, wisdom, strength, in any and every kind of difficulty or undertaking. This is a demand made on the saint alone. The poet, the artist, the musician, are permitted to be specialists, but the Religious Genius must be a holy—that is, a *whole*—man. Others may be partial, fragmentary, one-sided ; but of the saint we require wholeness and symmetry. This universal and instinctive ideal of sainthood, however obscured by tradition, or stifled by disappointments, or supplanted by lower standards, is still always lurking in the human heart and prompting its attitude towards the saint ; causing the needy to look to him for help, the sad and the joyful for sympathy, the perplexed for guidance, the weary and heavy-laden for support, the toiling for strength, the victorious for commendation. All sorts and conditions of men intuitively turn to the saint with expectation ; childhood, youth, old age, alike seek a response in him ; all hands stretch out to him, all eyes fasten upon him with yearning and hope.

This universal attitude of the human heart

towards sainthood has its root in the divinely inspired and original idea of a saint which conceives of him as a complete, or perfect, man, healthily developed on every side of his nature, keenly alive and related to all the life around him, touching it at all points by means of a large and universal sympathy and the intuitive knowledge that comes from such sympathy. Needless is it to explain that this ideal of the saint's wholeness does not include a proficiency in all arts and sciences, or skill in all the varied occupations of men. We care not if he be technically ignorant of all these, provided he can enter into the spirit of them, and reverence them, meeting with intelligent sympathy and interest those to whom they are so large a part of life. We do not ask that the saint be clever or brilliant; but one grace he must have, and that is love—a great, deep, far-reaching, all-including love for God and His universe, a love which forges links and chains binding him to everything around him, making him feel that he is part of it and it of him, a love which is the bond of perfectness. Limitations there are and must be

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to what can be actually attempted and done by finite beings; but *in spirit* at least the saint must be world-wide in his relatedness. He may be a specialist as regards his profession, and have a very restricted range of duties and occupation; but his *heart* must be universal in its sympathies and interests, discerning the innumerable, mysterious ties that bind God's creation into one, and knit the hearts and lives of men. However bound and limited outwardly, his spirit must be free to go out to all, and large enough to take in all.

In all the history of the world there stands forth but one who wholly fulfils our dreams of that completeness of human nature for which poets and philosophers sigh, and towards which the human heart everywhere yearns. That solitary figure standing out before us in majesty and beauty is the God-Man, Jesus. Oh that the Church could more fully enter into the spirit and scope of that wondrous life, and more truly represent it in its wholeness! Maybe the *world* has now its contribution to make to this great science of human nature, and that from outside the

pale of theology will come a richer and completer conception of the character of Jesus. Not all the research of ages can exhaust this treasury of full-orbed human glory and greatness! See the perfect symmetry of his nature, how all the qualities in right proportion blend and harmonise! While Paul stands forth as the man of faith, and John is distinguished by his love, in Jesus every grace and virtue is alike glorious; instead of a single starlike lustre which attracts attention to itself there is a soft and mellowed radiance of character. Nothing is disproportionate, nothing obtrusive; every quality has its right place, and is rightly related to every other. His love, so peculiarly personal and individual, is yet so universal; His gentleness is balanced by His strength; His compassion by sternness and justice; His world-wide sympathy is narrowed down when necessary to a single point or person. His entire being is in touch with the universe. He has a kinship with the mountains, the fields, the birds, the beasts, and He feels the throb of every human emotion of joy or sorrow, hope or fear, delight or disappoint-

ment. He is alive to every earthly and heavenly interest of man, entering into his toils and occupations, duties, recreations, aspirations. He despises nothing, He honours everything; and oh, how supremely He honours mankind! If ever humanity would feel its greatness it must be in close and vital contact with its great Representative, its enthusiastic Champion and Leader in the path of perfection.

Nor does this example of universal love and fellowship given us by Jesus exclude specialisation and concentration in life and duty. Who more perfectly than the Master has worked out the problem of consecration to a supreme effort without the loss of sympathetic touch with the world around? He has illustrated for us the truth, that in the service of mankind the lesser offices and ministrations must subserve to the greater and more essential, and that we may withdraw in order to concentrate, accumulate in order to scatter, conserve in order to enrich and bless the world; and yet all the while retain a largeness and tenderness and sensitiveness of heart that feels every

pulse-beat of the life around. He showed us concentration and diffusion combined and perfected; and demonstrated that it was possible, even here and now, under the conditions of human weakness and limitedness, to live intensely and deeply in the lives of others, without failing to fulfil one's own special mission in the world.

This high ideal of harmony and integration in our threefold life of body, soul, and spirit seems beyond our power to realise,—and yet we cannot let go the ideal. We still feel that it ought to be possible for heart and mind and body to be all awake and alert at once; to be actively living, working, growing side by side, healthily co-operating and benefiting one another. We long for this, and yet we find that even the best of men generally live only on one side of their nature at a time. Their heart and strength go into one department; in the others they merely exist, doing just enough to make subsistence possible, and presenting the spectacle of a life starved and dried up in all except one direction.

Or if this be not so, still we find the

training of our character divided into parts and sections occupying different periods of time. First, maybe, it is the spiritual that absorbs us; then a change comes and the intellectual gains the ascendancy; instead of an almost exclusive exercise of faith and the purely spiritual faculties, thought and reason begin to assert themselves. Then at a later period, perhaps, the claims of the practical and temporal life come before us, and demand our earnest attention. We discover that we were in danger of growing inhuman and unnatural, and must now subject ourselves to a training that will have a humanising effect upon us and relate us to the everyday world.

We grieve to find that one part of our nature seems to have to grow at the expense of another, nevertheless the fact remains. It is this fact that accounts for the remarkable changes we notice in our friends at different periods of their lives, changes which make their characters almost unrecognisable. A different side of the nature is in the ascendancy; when we first knew them it was the mind, now it is the heart. Needful as

this method of education may be, on account of our limitations and weaknesses, still Christ showed us by His own life and example that it was not the ideal; and so we must regard it merely as a means to an end, and look forward to, and hasten, that end, which is the integration and co-operation of the whole man.

Another sadly disappointing discovery we constantly make is that no unity, even for a single day, exists between these different parts of a man's life; as Emerson says, "Our moods do not know each other." The intellectual life is separated from the practical, the spiritual has a compartment of its own where the others do not intrude. When the preacher steps down from the pulpit we feel that he has left one personality behind and put on another—an equally good and lovable one maybe, but totally different: his everyday, ordinary self bears no relation to his pulpit self. In conversation and social intercourse the writer is quite unlike the man of whom we got a glimpse in the exalted sentiments of his book: those sentiments seem to belong to the literary side of his life

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and do not come down into commonplace affairs. The same spirit does not run through and through him; there is no unity; his personality is broken up, disintegrated, disconnected.

Here again in our disappointment and perplexity we turn to Jesus to ascertain the true standard of personal unity and harmony possible to man, and we find that, even under the restrictions and limitations of the earthly life, George Herbert's description of God's infinity pictures very accurately to us our Master's life and spirit:

"Thou art in small things great, not small in any.

Thy even praise can neither rise nor fall.

Thou art in all things one, in each thing many,

For Thou art infinite in one and all."

In Him at least we find perfect unity. It was always "the *same* Jesus" whatever He did—whether He gave the sermon on the mount, or sat at a wedding feast, or met the opposition of Scribes and Pharisees; one and the same great principle pervaded His whole physical, moral, and spiritual life; one exalted aim was carried into every part and detail of it. And this is what He calls us

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to—a complete inward unity and simplicity. In the midst of all our difficulties and discouragements He whispers, “Be of good cheer: I have overcome.”

Amiel says that “Christianity in breaking up man . . . has decomposed the human unity—in order, it is true, to reconstruct it more profoundly and truly. But Christianity has not yet digested this powerful leaven. She has not yet conquered the true humanity. . . . She has not penetrated into the whole heart of Jesus.” To penetrate into the *whole* heart of Jesus and learn its secret, to set His wholeness up on high as the model for all mankind, is peculiarly the privilege and the office of the Religiously Inspired. They have been elected to reproduce His spirit in their twentieth-century life, and thus to make Him live and move once more among men—a Being intelligible and beloved.

VIII

**THE STANDARD OF
THE RELIGIOUSLY INSPIRED**

CHAPTER VIII

THE STANDARD OF THE RELIGIOUSLY INSPIRED

“ . . . Until we reach the perfection of manhood, and that degree of development of which the ideal to be found in the Christ is the standard.”—*The Twentieth Century New Testament*.

“All things participate in the Divine nature. . . . The capacity of perfectibility is indefinite in man.”—DANTE.

“Every heart contains perfection’s germ.”—SHELLEY.

“Every man perfect in Christ Jesus.”—*New Testament*.

JESUS as the model of human symmetry and completeness has been before us. We have been considering Him as the example and prophecy of each individual life. Very comforting, very inspiring is this view, very full of hope and cheer for the discouraged heart of man—but, is it really true? Does Jesus indeed represent to us the possibilities of individual human character, or is it merely a beautiful and impossible dream?

These questions assail us, and must be answered before He can become to us in any real sense our example and inspiration.

Practically the answer has been given; and we have come to the conclusion that His completeness is not the model of the individual, but merely of the race. Only a few prophets and seers in every age have retained, in spite of theology and experience, their belief in the possible wholeness of each separate human character. But for the rest of us—so accustomed are we now to regarding the fragmentariness of our character as a necessity, and a partial development as the best we can expect, that the very aspiration for wholeness has nearly died out of the heart of humanity. We each seem to be quite content to represent *one* aspect of the Divine nature in whose likeness we were made, and let some one else represent another, consoling ourselves with the thought that it is humanity collectively, and no one single unit of it, that is capable of becoming the whole man. We talk of likeness to Christ, and then single out a virtue here and a grace there, and think that it is all we can hope to reproduce of that

likeness. We become specialists, forgetting that the chief characteristic of Christ's life was its symmetry and wholeness,—every side of the nature—spirit, intellect, senses—all purified, disciplined, cultured, exalted;—nothing in the character brought to perfection at the expense of anything else; no inequalities, no disproportionateness, but symmetry, harmony, beauty, throughout.

No wonder that Jesus, as the standard of wholeness in personal life, has been removed so far from us, when even such deep thinkers as the late Bishop Westcott tell us that His completeness is only a model for the race collectively, and that the individual members of it can never expect to be anything but fragmentary and partial.

What a death-knell such statements, coming from great and holy men, seem to be to the instinct within us for personal and individual completeness! And yet the instinct survives! It lurks unsuspected in the depths of the heart, despite our theories. We never can be quite content to realise completeness only thus in the aggregate, but demand it in the individual and the unit also. And is not this

very instinct an earnest that there is provision for its fulfilment? Moreover, if God made man in His own image, there must be in him the germ of every quality and attribute that exists in God Himself, and hence that of completeness also. Human nature is the Divine in miniature, in infancy; and "every heart contains perfection's germ." To be consistent, if we take Jesus as the example of individual love, individual patience, individual strength, then we must also take Him as the example of individual wholeness.

It is the loss of this ideal of wholeness that accounts for our arrested development in this direction. "We are our ideals," and very certain is it that nothing higher than the standard we set before us do we attain to. If not from humanity at large, then from the saints at least we might have expected greater progress towards this comprehensiveness and completeness of character. But they also disappoint us. Metaphorically speaking, each one looks out upon the world through the bars of his own little cell, where he is imprisoned by the smallness of his nature. Each one has narrowed down his conceptions of

truth to the compass of his one small mind, withdrawing his sympathies from the greater part of God's universe, and directing them into a little channel of his own making. The music of heaven is reduced to the monotonous note of either Anglican, or Evangelical, or Roman theology. Should a broader mind, or more universal heart, manifest itself in any one of these communities, and seek to harmonise the fragments of truth for which each stands, there is no home for him anywhere. Men do not understand him; they have lost the key to his nature, and that key is belief in the universalness of Jesus as representing universalness in man.

In spite of past unbelief, and consequent failure, the saints now need to lead the way, and bring mankind back to this high aim. Wholeness *is* possible! God says so, the human heart says so, shining examples in the past say so, living witnesses in the present say so. Rare as is this type of character, we are poor indeed if we have not sometimes seen an approach to it, and basked in the genial sunshine of a nature that in its breadth and sympathy reminded us of Christ. We

have surely known at least one man whose heart beat with every other heart, whose soul every other soul claimed as its twin, in whom the mystic, the thinker, the toiler, the sufferer alike delighted.

“A man so various that he seemed to be
Not one, but all mankind’s epitome.”

In the presence of such a man all meanness and pettiness shrink away, and nobleness in him awakens the dormant nobility in others. With him all feel themselves to be perfectly understood, honoured, and transfigured. His heart is so gentle that shame and guilt and sorrow do not fear to uncover themselves before it. His forgiveness “means crowned, not vanquished, when it says Forgiven.” “His sympathy is more invigorating than reproof, his reproof more tender than sympathy.” It is a nature into which all other natures nestle and find a home, and warmth, nourishment, protection, and stimulus. Of just such a being was it once gratefully said by one to whom had been extended this highest form of hospitality, “She is just like a hot-house for making

people grow in! A shelter from chill and adverse influences, and yet so transparent that the light of God shines through and ripens those she surrounds with her influence." Another description of a modern representative of the universality of Jesus is as follows: "A Christian so glorious in all directions, with such depth and height of purely spiritual experience, and at the same time such breadth of human sympathy and *practical* energy."

How good it is to find qualities we so much admire, but generally see only in parts and fragments distributed among men, tending towards integration and combination in a single character! Greatly are we encouraged to discover that some, at least, are succeeding in culturing not merely one or two, but many of the varied powers and faculties of their nature, attaining to an amazing self-possession in which the spiritual, the intellectual, and the practical blend and co-operate.

If it has been our privilege to meet even one such being we will have had a great uplift towards the realisation of Christ's comprehensiveness,

The writings of the American poet Walt Whitman are full of aspirations after this glorious type of character, which he fully believes to be attainable, and to which he looks forward as the sure development of the not distant future. In one of his poems he speaks of this universal man as "The Answerer," and says :

" Him all wait for ; his word is decisive and final.

Him they accept, in him lave, in him perceive themselves as
amid light ;

Him they immerse, and he immerses them."

Walt Whitman brings out beautifully the power of a truly loving and sympathetic man to be to other men a mirror, reflecting and emphasising in his own many-sided nature and character the glory of theirs. All claim him as their representative and brother ; each one feels him to be truly a part of himself, and yet a better, higher self. By means of this abundant sympathy and universal relatedness the man fuses and blends with humanity : he is immersed in it and it in him. He loses himself in a passion for humanity, and all of humanity that touches him begins to find itself in him and realise its greatness and

lay hold of its possibilities. It is a repetition, poor and inadequate perhaps, but recognisable and *complete* in all its features, of the Master's life on earth; and that Master rejoices to have found a heart to which He can impart what is the very genius of Christianity—a heart-knitting love, a unifying principle of life. He sees of the travail of his soul, and is satisfied.

Very different is this from the Pharisee type, the man who folds his robes of religion around him and stands afar off prescribing high ideals for mankind: lading them with heavy burdens which he will not himself touch.

"The Answerer," Walt Whitman goes on to say, has "the pass-key to hearts." He is also "the joiner" who unites in himself conflicting elements of life and thought. He is the seer who not only intuitively effects this union, but "sees how they join," and can make the secret plain to all. He is the interpreter, interpreting human perplexities and experiences in the clear light of heaven. In this great soul all men find a response, a sympathetic, reverential, exalting, inspiring

response to everything in their life and occupation. It matters not if such a man have neither wealth, nor position, nor educational advantages; in him sympathy gives birth to a marvellous intelligence and practical helpfulness that make it possible for him to be "all things to all men."

Walt Whitman's "Answerer" is so engaging, so stimulating, that we cannot dismiss him without the following description in the poet's own words :

"Then the mechanics take him for a mechanic,
And the soldiers suppose him to a soldier, and the sailors
that he has followed the sea,
The authors take him for an author, and the artists for an
artist,
And the labourers perceive that he would labour with them
and love them ;
No matter what the work is, that he is the one to follow
it or has followed it ;
No matter what the nation, that he find his brothers and
sisters there.
The English believe he comes of their English stock,
A Jew to the Jews he seems, a Russ to the Russ, usual
and near, removed from none.
The gentleman of perfect blood acknowledges his perfect
blood,
The insulter, the prostitute, the angry person, the beggar,
see themselves in the ways of him, he strangely trans-
mutes them,
They are not vile any more : they hardly know themselves
they are so grown."

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What is the secret, we may well inquire, of this divinely beautiful type of character, which, independent of external circumstances, flourishes in any soil, to which prosperity and adversity are alike? We find that the secret must be looked for in the heart rather than the head. It is the universal *relatedness of love*, and the intelligence that springs from love. What we love we intuitively learn to know and understand. The highest knowledge and discernment are the outcome of love and sympathy. "He that is spiritual discerneth all things." So with this universally related heart, participating in the love of the Divine Being for all that He has made, all life becomes a tender and helpful ministry to the life around him, and a perpetual prayer.

"He prayeth best who loveth best
All things both great and small ;
For the dear God who loveth us,
He made and loveth all."

This glorious wholeness and completeness of love, and through love, is God's ideal for humanity. To bring not merely the race, collectively, but each member of it individually

up to this standard is the purpose which He is working out patiently; and "the work will continue," St. Paul tells us, "until we all attain to that unity which comes from faith in the Son of God and from a fuller knowledge of Him, and until we reach the perfection of manhood and that degree of development of which the ideal to be found in the Christ is the standard." That this integration, or "unity," is not with St. Paul merely an aspiration for the community collectively, but also for the individual separately, is very clear; He constantly speaks of how strenuously he labours in order that he may "present *every man* perfect in Christ Jesus." His ideal seems to have been, first the completeness of each unit, the perfectness of each part; then the welding together of all into a glorious whole—glorious because of the perfection of each several part. What he aspired to for the community he first aspired to for each member of it. He required the individual to be a prophecy, a complete representation in miniature, of the whole body "knit together." He worked unwearyingly and

hopefully for a full-orbed, perfected character in each separate follower of Christ.

This undoubtedly is the ideal, and Christ is the model; all human nature in its infinitely smaller degree must reflect the whole nature of God combining and uniting in itself what is now scattered and distributed among the race—all qualities of heart and head, all graces and virtues of public and private, social and domestic, secular and religious life, and in fact whatsoever things are true and pure and lovely and of good report.

In this world the partial aspect of character is the only one to which men have a key; the other when it does appear is not understood. The prevailing idea is that to be widely related in heart and mind is to be not deep and thorough. This view is excusable because in the present limitedness of our powers and capacities we frequently find that the man who is in any sense broad in his sympathies and activities tends to be superficial; if his life spreads itself over a broad area it does so sparsely and meagrely, for the simple reason that there is not enough of it.

Narrow and deep, or broad and shallow; intellectual or emotional, spiritual or practical; we feel that we have to choose between these alternatives. But, nevertheless, allowing that there is undoubtedly a great difficulty here, due to our limitedness, and that because of it God needs to educate us in parts and fragments, still we must reiterate, and ever keep before us, that wholeness and symmetry is the goal of each human character, and that with patience and perseverance the difficulties can be overcome and the ideal attained. That ideal is a nature to which Phillips Brooks applies the description of the heavenly city, "The length and the breadth and the height thereof are equal."

In a very special sense is this ideal set before the Religiously Inspired. They are meant to be the first to realise it; they are endowed above others with the gifts and powers needed for the undertaking. To take the lead in this direction, to pave the way for the rest, to prove the possibility of such an attainment by becoming examples of it,—this is their high calling! Much self-sacrifice, discipline, faith, and hope are

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needed for the task; the heart must be opened wide to God and to all the varied life around. The aspirants to this exalted ideal must rid themselves of pride and self-complacency and become reverent observers and learners, drinking in the spirit of people and things. Thus shall there flow into them a universal love, producing relatedness and sympathy, which is the basis of that rich, full-orbed, symmetrical character which is their heritage as heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.

IX

**THE SNARE OF THE RELIGIOUSLY
INSPIRED**

CHAPTER IX

THE SNARE OF THE RELIGIOUSLY INSPIRED

"Thou desirest truth in the inward parts."—*The Bible*.

"Wordsworth honoured himself by his simple adherence to truth, and was very willing not to shine."—EMERSON.

"The genius of the day does not decline to a deed, but to a beholding."—EMERSON.

"Unwillingly the soul is deprived of truth."—PLATO.

THERE is no privilege which has not its accompanying snare, and the privilege of spiritual illumination is no exception to this rule.

It is not easy to trace an evil to its source. The outward manifestations and superficial forms of it tend to arrest and hold the attention and prevent deeper investigation. But no permanent remedy is possible until we have pushed through to the heart and core of the trouble.

The peculiar snare of Religious Genius, in all its grades, is a certain subtle kind of untruthfulness. Looked at superficially this statement might be questioned, but searching deeper down we find it to be true. There is among the Religiously Inspired a general tendency to pay undue regard to the *appearance* of things, coupled with a hardly realised indifference to the truth behind the outward-seeming. It is a temper of mind of which Amiel says, "What it seeks is the figure, the fashion, the manner of things, not their deepest life, their soul, their secret."

This snare—let us call it the snare of appearances—is not crude in its form, not easily detected; nor does it appear much on the surface, or, if seen there, can be frequently mistaken for a virtue. Nevertheless, it is the fruitful source of much evil that brings discredit on the cause that the Religiously Inspired have so much at heart: namely, the cause of a religion based on illumination and inspiration—the cause, in fact, of Religious *Genius*.

It is strange that this people who start their religious life with such insistence on

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reality, who require that the inception of religious truth should be vital and deep, beginning with the spirit, or heart, of man, and thus becoming natural and spontaneous, should at a later stage of development fall the most easily into the snare of untrueness and unreality. Still the reason is not far to seek. It may, we think, be traced to three main sources—namely (1) A vision, or vivid realisation of the ideal Christian life and character. (2) A doctrine of its attainment by *faith alone*. (3) A great zeal for the doctrine of faith as against that of works.

Let us deal with the first of these three causes—that is, the acceptance of a very high ideal and the difficulty of realising it. With the Religiously Inspired the start is sincere enough, beginning with regeneration of the inmost nature, but to maintain religious experience at that high level is not easy; to work into all their outer life the same regenerating principle which has transformed, to some extent, the inner—that is no small matter. Since, however, the standard they have accepted requires this of them, and the demand involves too much

strenuousness, they drop unwittingly into the snare of untruthfulness and unreality—taking the outward form of a virtue for the virtue itself, and deceiving themselves more than they deceive others. They lapse into sentimentality and loquaciousness. Emerson describes these victims of self-deception as “talkers who mistake the description for the thing, the saying for the having.” With regard to the difficulty of getting them back on to a basis of reality, he says, “A little experience acquaints us with the inconvertibility of the sentimentalist, the soul that is lost by mimicking soul. . . . What lessons can be prescribed for the debauchee of sentiment? The innocence of the patient is the first difficulty: he believes his disease is blooming health.”

The use of the word “cant” as applied to religious people of this type is to a great extent excusable even while it offends a certain deeper sense of justice within us. In so far as there is over-expression of feeling, and over-statement of facts, it is true. But cant is not hypocrisy: the difference between the two is marked.

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Hypocrisy, by which is implied a deliberate intention to deceive, does not come into this attitude of mind at all;—sentimentality is the term that entirely covers the ground. Because among this class (as among every other) an occasional hypocrite is discovered, it is cruel and unjust to attribute the same failing to the rest. The poet Cowper indignantly reproves the injustice of those who—

“Pleased at heart because on holy ground
Sometimes a canting hypocrite is found,
Reproach a people with his single fall,
And cast his filthy raiment at them all.”

Hypocritical they certainly are not as a body, though a certain degree of loquaciousness—a too great emphasis on the importance of speech in the domain of religion—makes them a prey to the subtle snare of exaggeration and untruthfulness. “In the multitude of words there wanteth not sin.”

To return to the point from which we have digressed—namely, the acceptance of a high ideal as one of the sources of that sentimentality which is a subtle form of untruthfulness—it is not difficult to see how the very privilege of illumination has fostered it.

That flood of light poured into the soul at conversion, or subsequently, revealed a glorious standard of life and conduct, which was ardently embraced; a far wider range of duty and virtue became apparent, and what was there seen remained imprinted on heart and mind, haunting and alluring the soul. No wonder, then, that this vision of the ideal might easily be mistaken for the actual. Others who have not seen the vision with such vividness, who have not grasped the beautiful possibility in the same intense way, are not subjected to this danger. It is the peculiar snare of the Idealist in every realm; but in other realms it is excused and passed over—only in the sphere of religion does its deformity fully come to light.

Insight brings with it a tremendous responsibility. To see clearly necessitates prompt, decisive, strenuous action, adequate fulfilment. To be “disobedient to the heavenly vision” brings disaster; to reject or neglect the accompanying responsibilities leads to dire consequences. In the measure that these religious Idealists fail, or delay, to put into practice what they have seen, to transform

the ideal into the actual,—do they fall into the clutches of sentimentality, and get entangled in the snare of appearances.

The second of the three main causes already named as responsible for untrueness in the religious life of this class is an error in their creed, or rather, an incompleteness. A doctrine which is right and true enough as far as it goes, but which represents only half the truth, is separated from its co-relative doctrine and exalted to supreme and exclusive importance. The other half of the truth, which would have brought in balance and insured safety, is lost sight of.

The partial error to which we refer is the idea common among the Religiously Inspired, that goodness may be acquired by the mere exercise of faith. Hence it follows that this being the case, all virtues and graces of character ought to become instantly and suddenly the possession of every believer. Therefore those believers who have been unable to measure up to this standard regard themselves, and are regarded by others, as having failed in the duty of exercising faith; and, worse still, the failure is often looked

upon with suspicion as being the result of sin, or rebellion against God, or, at least, lack of earnestness. It is generally felt that the exercise of faith has been hindered by some such inward or outward obstacle.

Other schools of thought would regard failure in the attainment of this high standard differently. Maybe it is because they do not sufficiently recognise the importance of faith as a factor in the transfiguration of human character, and depend more on the efforts of the will, intellect, and conscience. Under these circumstances, greater (perhaps too great) allowances are made for the frailty of human nature ; too much emphasis is laid on the attainment of Christian character as *a process*—a long-drawn-out, weary education, and the element of time in culturing virtue is allowed for to an extent that tends to encourage sloth.

This school, while it avoids the snare of tempting its adherents to hasty and unsubstantial professions of success, on the other hand also fails to spur them on to attainment. The fact is that it can no more do without the doctrine of achievement and growth by

faith than that doctrine can do without the recognition that human will, effort, and industry have a great part to play in all progress. The one side, emphasising as it does God's part of the work, and the other standing for man's co-operation, are each the true corollary of the other. Only together do they set forth the real truth; apart they each tend to become a source of error and weakness, and it is hard to say which error is the more serious in its results.

With the Religiously Inspired the process of *education* in goodness finds but little place, or, rather, it is an education of *faith* that is really, and almost exclusively, aimed at. This is no wonder when the miracle-working power attributed to faith is such that a sufficient degree of it is regarded as capable of enabling its possessor to leap at once into the fulness of virtue, to travel by a royal road to perfection. Hence faith is the one essential; to its culture all the energy of the soul is directed, and other departments of life suffer.

How far this view as it stands by itself is right, it is not our purpose to discuss here :

we merely state it to show that it is partly responsible for bringing about that peculiar form of untrueness on which we have been dwelling. Nevertheless, in passing, we cannot refrain from expressing the opinion that while faith is undoubtedly the supreme factor in the attainment of goodness—leading us as it does to dependence upon God—and marvellous as are its miracles, it is surely a mistake to lose sight of the fact that faith, by itself, does not *permanently* produce these results. The other forces of our nature also need to be enlisted in the task. Will, conscience, intellect, industry, have their share; the element of time must come in, and growth by steps and stages has to be allowed for. Faith brings the complete vision, and thus potentially the attainment—for what we can see we may become. Faith quickens all our powers and sends them forth in quest of the blessing, but if they refuse to go and prefer to stay and gaze at the ideal, then faith can do no more. “Faith without works is dead.”

To return to our subject—it is easy to see how the idea of a sudden bound into goodness of a high order being possible makes all

failure to attain seem culpable, and that, regarding it in this light, many should fall unconsciously into this snare of appearances, deceiving themselves by the very intensity of their desire, and expressing what they would wish to be true rather than what actually is so. Over-expression and over-statement in almost all departments of life is a conspicuous result of this masked evil. There is no intention to deceive (the bare idea would be hateful), but it comes about quite naturally that, having the eyes fixed only and always on the ideal and averted from the real, seeing only the object of desire and holding a certain theory regarding its attainment, the inevitable result should be failure to realise the true relation between the actual facts and the beautiful ideal. Indeed, in the very desire to culture faith and shield it from discouragement, this attitude of mind is often aimed at. "Do not look within or around, but above," is the substance of a good deal of the exhortation in some deeply religious circles. Good and wholesome as this advice sometimes is to morbidly introspective souls, it is often liable to be misapplied and to become the parent of

unreality. A successful physician of the spiritual life was wont to say that the great drawback of preaching was that "the wrong people ran away with the prescriptions."

The third-named cause of unreality in religious life is zeal. The desire to exalt the doctrine of faith, to demonstrate for the good of mankind its superior efficacy, so that others may be attracted to it and benefited by it, subjects the ardently zealous to the subtle temptation of appearing to have acquired virtues and powers which are as yet only an ideal and an aspiration. Then, again, professions and statements having been made with regard to the miracle-working power of this form of religion, it is felt that they must be made good and substantiated by actual facts and experiences if they are to be believed. Some of the most enthusiastic and well-meaning of this class unintentionally raise expectations with regard to their own personal sanctity and power, and finding themselves unable to meet these demands they are tempted half unconsciously to disguise, even to themselves, the fact of failure, and to acquire the outer form and appearance of

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the virtues they do not possess—doing evil that good may come of it. Thus do they sacrifice the culture of genuine goodness to a showy and superficial semblance of it; and this appears in some cases to answer so well as to become an established and unrecognised habit of the soul.

To make quite clear the nature and extent of this evil of unreality it will be as well to give a few illustrations in which we may trace not only the evil itself, but the working of one or other, or perhaps all, of the three causes to which we have attributed it. For instance, one of the great ideals of this type of religious life is "the peace of a perfect trust," an absolute repose in the midst of trouble and strife, produced by faith in God. It is very common to hear an otherwise truthful man, to whom some misfortune has come, agitating and trying him greatly, assert, with assumed cheerfulness and forced smiles, that he is in a state of perfect peace and rest. And yet, all the while, a suppressed tumult of pain, perplexity, fear, and doubt, is surging within. It does not strike him that it is not true to describe himself

as enjoying perfect peace. He, seeing clearly the ideal, expresses what he would wish to be the truth, not what actually is. While one cannot but admire the earnestness and heroism, one sees how the haste to claim achievement has led to the simulation of the virtue before it has been gained.

Love is another of the supreme ideals of the Religiously Inspired. But this, "the greatest thing in the world," is not the easiest to acquire; and in the paucity of real love, expressions of interest, affection, and harmony are far in excess of the facts. Moreover, evil speaking and uncharitableness, which are indulged more openly in other circles, tend here to take a covert form, and to hide behind pious phrases and apparent kindness, till it becomes difficult to detect the bitterness and hostility in this guise of gentleness and sweetness. Sentimentality has become a cloak; the profession of love is mistaken for the reality of it, and chiefly by the professor himself.

Then again, with some, another ideal is the far-reaching sympathy and helpfulness on which we dwelt in the last chapter, and

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the temptation to pretend to a far greater degree of this than is as yet true besets, and unconsciously masters, some, especially among the leaders and teachers. "Gush," excessive show of sympathy and interest in others, is the result. The price that must be paid for a spirit of universal love and fellowship is too great for most, and therefore the easier course of acquiring the outward form and appearance of that spirit is resorted to with more or less success. It may frequently deceive and please, but it has no real and abiding power to bless and uplift human lives.

Many other instances might be cited of this subtle snare of appearances, which seems to waylay Religious Genius more than genius of any other kind, for the obvious reason that in this realm not only vision and inspiration are required, but also, as a result of these advantages, morality of a high order is expected. It is the greatness of the demand that tempts to sentimentality and unreality. The world goes so much by appearances that it is not easy consistently to obey the command to "Walk by

faith and not by appearance," and, almost insidiously, expediency and show tend to become greater factors in religious life and service than truth and reality. This danger in its deep and subtle aspects is not as a rule understood and honestly faced, though the lesser and more palpable forms of it, because perceived, are faithfully and successfully combated.

The statements made in this chapter need to be guarded against misconceptions arising from careless perusal; therefore, in closing, we would insist that it must not for a moment be supposed that this charge of a subtle form of unreality is made at large against the whole community of which we have been speaking. This would be unjust, as many members are totally free from any such weakness. All we urge is that it is a danger which accompanies that form of religion which exalts faith to supreme and almost exclusive importance; and those who have drunk the most deeply into this spirit, and are the most zealous exponents of it, are the most liable to fall into this snare.

It is due to a strong conviction that

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religious sentimentality is largely an unconscious and unrecognised failing, that emphasis has been given to it in these pages, which have been written with an earnest desire to help a class so eminently fitted for great personal achievements in character and virtue and much useful service to mankind, from a snare that hinders success in both departments. The contribution of the Religiously Inspired towards the progress of humanity should be an unquenchable enthusiasm for the ideal, coupled with an absolute thoroughness and trueness in life and conduct. This union of the ideal and the real would be irresistible in its power to uplift and save mankind!

X

**THE MISTAKE OF THE RELIGIOUSLY
INSPIRED**

CHAPTER X

THE MISTAKE OF THE RELIGIOUSLY INSPIRED

"The profoundest experiences admit of no monopoly."

PHILLIPS BROOKS.

"Gently deal with souls untaught."—ST. AIDAN.

"Ah! fragments of a whole, ordained to be
Points in the life I waited? What are ye
But roundels of a ladder, which appeared
Awhile the very platform it was reared to lift me on?"

BROWNING.

THE function of faith is not merely to quicken a God-consciousness in man, but to energise every faculty of his whole nature. We are "saved by faith," but as Dr. John Hunter, in a striking sermon, explains, "Salvation is character. . . . To save the soul is to save the man in every faculty of his complex being, and in every relation and province of his many-sided life." The great mistake of the Religiously Inspired

with which we purpose to deal arises from a limited conception of the scope and office of faith as a transfiguring power in human life. Once to see clearly the wide area covered by this miracle-working faculty would be to see also this mistake, and just where it is to be located.

“Conversion” is the great central event of life to the religiously inspired man. That unique and wondrous experience burns itself into his memory, his whole soul glows with it years after—nay, to the end of time. He knows it was no mere impression or imagination, but a real impartation of Divine light and life, which evidenced itself in words and deeds that were once impossible. It was a quickening, renewing visitation from on high. Thus far there is no mistake; and the privileged being who has been the subject of this great transformation cannot be too enthusiastic and zealous in urging others to seek the same blessed uplift.

But now let us look more closely into this wondrous experience of Conversion. When it takes place, what is quickened and regenerated? Is it the whole man, or only a

part of him? How much of the area of his being does that event cover? These questions are not easy to answer, because in each case the power and extent of the regenerating principle differs, being infinitely greater in force and wider in range in some lives than in others. Nevertheless, we may safely say that it is not the *whole* man that is converted, renewed, and empowered in this initial experience; it is only a fraction of him, and much work of the same nature still remains to be done in him. Recognising this to be the case, Wesley, referring to a later experience he called "sanctification," as distinguished from this which he termed "justification," says:

"Finish then Thy new creation,
Pure and spotless may we be."

But even the *finishing* he saw and referred to did not by any means comprehend the whole work of human regeneration; it was only a further stage, and there was much to follow.

In conversion everything circles round a single point, and that point is the awakening of a *God-consciousness* in the soul; which

comes by faith into a vivid realisation of God to which it had, in the figurative language of Scripture, previously been "dead." That highest faculty of the nature by which God is perceived, loved, and desired, had long been dormant. Then there came—it matters not how, whether by human teaching or in solitary musing—a great wave of power which lifted the man up into new light and energy. He saw God with the inner vision of faith, and the reality of earthly things faded away in the intenser reality of spiritual facts. God became more real than all else, and in that moment a new relationship to Him, and a new standard of duty towards Him, came into being; a consciousness of new life and power sprang up within the heart and showed itself in words and deeds that seemed a miracle. The new morality, born of this newly gained God-consciousness, was an altogether larger conception—including love and duty to God. The soul had awakened on its *Godward* side, and was thereby also enriched on its *manward* side—enabled to embrace a far higher standard of love and service to the race,

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And yet, great and wonderful as was this event, shaking man's nature to its deepest depths, it stopped far short of converting and regenerating his whole being. True that for a while it seemed to him to include his whole nature: it bounded his horizon, he could see no further regeneration beyond it. So final and absolute did it seem that not till the first shock of glad surprise was over could he see that other sides of his nature still slumbered, and that not until they too had been awakened and converted to God could the experience be considered in any sense complete. The fact is that the awakening of God-consciousness in the heart of man is only a fraction of the work—it is a step, often the initial step, towards a complete regeneration. Presently the intellect, the will, the senses, must all come under the same illuminating and life-giving power. Viewed in this light the contention of the Anglican school of theology, that there must be many conversions in a man's life, contains a deep truth.

The mistake of the religiously gifted comes in just at this point. They regard this marvellous quickening of God-consciousness

as covering the whole range of God's quickening operations in a human nature, whereas it is only a part. To them, all who have not known this experience are outside the kingdom of God. "He is not a Christian"; how common it is to hear that remark indiscriminately made concerning some whose life and conduct bear every mark of Christian discipleship! All must be converted in the self-same way, undergo the same kind of change, experience the same feelings, realise the same results in character and action, or else they are outside the fold of Christ. A monopoly is claimed for this one way of approach to God, no other is recognised.

It is not surprising that this misconception results in an attitude towards the greater part of the human race which galls and irritates it, and hinders the powerful effect that the teaching and testimony of the spiritually illumined might otherwise have on mankind. "It is not true that you only are within, and we are without, the kingdom of God," is the response of indignant humanity. Welling up within men's hearts is an

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instinct that tells them they also are God's, objects of His care, His leading, His teaching, and it is hard to tolerate a class which lays exclusive claim to these privileges.

This is a brief description of the war that is being waged between the religiously illuminated and the rest of mankind all over the world. The assumption not merely of religious superiority, but of religious monopoly, on the part of the former is the chief point of contest, and much that he regards as hostility to his message of spiritual regeneration is, in reality, only dislike of and resistance to this particular attitude. Often when he feels himself to be a martyr he is only suffering for this mistake.

This brings us to an important question. How far is this attitude of the Religiously Inspired permissible? Is it true that the subjects of the wonderful spiritual experience we have described are the only beings who have any religious life? Surely not! There are other realms of man's nature besides this of religious *consciousness*, and God is dealing with and educating these in many whom the "converted" would not regard as objects

of special religious culture. He is working deeply, but the work is going on in some other department of the mysterious and complex being. Perhaps it is the quality of perseverance in righteousness, in exalted principle, under difficult circumstances and without external aids, that is the special object He has in view. It is clear that vivid God-consciousness, which gives wings to the soul and makes duty easy, would even frustrate such a purpose as this. Do not the religiously gifted themselves speak of times when the light is withdrawn for a while, and they are left to walk in darkness, in order that they may learn a similar lesson? Why, then, quarrel with those from whom it has been altogether withheld, and refuse to believe that God is working in them all the time, and that they too have a religious life, though of a different kind? The Bible tells us that "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God"; it also says, "Whosoever doeth righteousness is born of God"; his righteous deeds testify to the life of God within the man, even though there is as yet no vivid religious *consciousness*.

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The explanation is that it is not the consciousness, but another part of his nature that is "born of God"—"born again"—a part that in the spiritually illuminated man may yet be lying dormant. "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" asked a certain lawyer of Jesus. "Keep the commandments," was His reply. "What lack I yet?" the virtuous young ruler demanded. "If thou wouldst be perfect," says Jesus, "go sell that thou hast, and give to the poor . . . and come follow Me." It is clear that Jesus did not regard the awakening of this intense religious consciousness as the one and only factor in religious life. He taught that obedience to law, charity, self-denial, also played their part in spiritual development.

The *order* in which God carries on His work of evolving human perfection is as varied as the methods He employs. Because He begins in some cases by giving a vivid realisation of Himself it does not follow that He is always going to begin at just that point, nor is it to be concluded that those who have not yet a strong religious sense have not been quickened at all. They may

be keenly alive in some other department in which the spiritually illumined man is still "dead"—love, for instance, or wisdom, or practical benevolence, or will-power. In their case attention to these qualities has *preceded* religious illumination and emotion, and will eventually lead up to it, for God "meeteth him that worketh righteousness." In the other case it will have to follow. The order is reversed, that is all. The goal is the regeneration of the *whole* man.

If the religiously illuminated could once see this gift of religious consciousness in its right relation to other gifts—if they could only value the gift of an "ennobling spirit of struggle," or of a great capacity for loving, or an adherence to duty without the stimulus of feeling or reward—the strange misconception that there is no other religious life but theirs would disappear.

Is there, then, no advantage in spiritual illumination and regeneration? Is it only one of the many methods employed by God in the religious development of man, and therefore of no more value than any of the others? In reply to these questions we would

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emphatically say that there is an advantage—a great advantage in the awakening of the God-consciousness. This way to higher things is the *privileged* way—it is the royal road. All that we dissent from is the assumption that it is the *only* road. Other roads there are too—all leading up to God and goodness, though perhaps by paths more tortuous, and ascents more steep.

The doctrine of election, which may be traced right through human history and experience, makes its appearance here also. There are souls elected to a sudden transition from darkness to light, from spiritual weakness to spiritual power by a vision of faith; and these souls stand in the same relation to the rest of humanity as do the poets and artists and gifted men of every class. They are stewards of the good gift of God which He has entrusted to them, not primarily for themselves, but for the benefit of the race; by a special and almost supernatural endowment they have been selected to become channels of this same grace to others. They are but pioneers leading the way into a realm of Divine illumination and power which all may

enter, if not here and now, then hereafter. They are sent ahead to be beacon lights to those who are struggling in the mists and deserts of a Godward life unilluminated by faith's vision, yet full of deep religious truth and fidelity such as the privileged ones in their easier upward ascent might often covet.

The religiously gifted cannot press too urgently their side of the truth, nor be too insistent in requiring in all an awakened consciousness of God and His claims ; but for them to indulge in wholesale condemnation of those who have not yet been brought to that place of privilege, is a great error. It is a grave injustice to blame these less gifted souls as though the fault lay, of necessity, in themselves ; for in some cases it is undoubtedly the sovereign will of God that withholds, for a while—possibly even throughout the whole term of the earthly life—the privilege of spiritual illumination ; maybe that by the very waiting and seeking a deeper capacity for it may be created. One to whom the vision of faith did not come for many years, though earnestly sought, used to question why, when there was no apparent hindrance,

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he should have been kept waiting thus. The reason, however, was not far to seek. During that long winter-time the roots of his religious life were striking deep and far; qualities of steadfastness, faithfulness, perseverance, determination, were being developed by the very absence of what he desired; and when the spring-time came, there sprang up from those vigorous roots a religious life so strong and fervent and practical, so marvellously illumined and wise, as to far outstrip those whose term of apprenticeship to drudgery and effort had not been so long or so severe.

And thus it may be with many whom the more gifted souls are inclined to condemn—they are only waiting for the touch of God to spring into a beautiful, *conscious*, religious life, for which they have, by faithfulness and struggle, been preparing. The building will be all the better for the laying of broad and strong and deep foundations.

But while it is true that there are earnest souls who may not enter into the realm of spiritual illumination and power because their time has not yet come, there are a great many more who do not enter because they either

refuse or neglect to fulfil the conditions. They will not repent, believe, become as little children, subordinating reason and will to God, and subjecting themselves to His quickening operations in the realm of the spirit—that highest department of our three-fold nature. Therefore discrimination is needed in the attitude of the saint towards those who have not entered the sphere of religious consciousness. Some need to be severely judged and reminded of the punishments that await wilful rejection of God's grace; others, again, require to be warned of the incalculable loss that attends neglect and delay in things spiritual; while those true souls who are destined to wait for the heavenly vision demand the tenderest sympathy and support of the gifted brotherhood to whom that vision has already come.

The misconception with which we have been dealing, and which we have seen to be the source of a hard, narrow, critical, and monopolising spirit among the Religiously Inspired, can only be removed by that privileged class facing the fact that their experience of spiritual awakening and re-

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generation is at best only a partial one. A deeper humility and a larger charity will mingle with, and temper, their zeal when they come to see the truth regarding themselves as Emerson saw it—namely, that “they are not proficient: they are novices: they only show the way in which man should travel when the soul has greater health and prowess. Yet,” he continues, “let them feel the dignity of their charge, and deserve a larger power. Their heart is the ark in which the fire is concealed, which shall burn in a broader and universal flame.”

“Are you in earnest? Seize this very minute.
What you can do, or dream you can, *begin it*.
Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it.
Only engage, and then the mind grows heated;
Begin, and then the work will be completed.”

GOETHE.

“Only God’s aristocracy are crucified. It is often a pathetic part of the awful tragedy that the agony of the sacrifice is, to an extent, the work of their own hands.”

“The road to death is life,
The gate of life is death.”

CHRISTINA ROSSETTI.

XI
SOME FAULTS OF THE RELIGIOUSLY
INSPIRED

CHAPTER XI

SOME FAULTS OF THE RELIGIOUSLY INSPIRED

“Who can discern his errors? Clear Thou me from hidden faults.”—*The Bible*.

“Man must pass from old to new,
From vain to real, from mistake to fact,
From what once seemed good to what now proves best!
How could a man have progression otherwise?”

BROWNING.

TO face and recognise a fault is to be more than halfway towards the conquest of it. It is the faults that lurk in hidden nooks and corners, and shelter behind the semblance of what is fair and beautiful, that are the most hopeless and irremediable.

It is not therefore the open and commonly recognised faults of the religiously gifted with which we purpose to deal in this chapter; for these faults are already receiving due attention. It is rather the less apparent, the

more disguised forms of evil to be found in this community, that we would touch on, in the hope of helping, thereby, towards their detection and correction.

One of these faults is a subtle form of spiritual pride. Amiel touches the heart of the matter in a single paragraph, which runs thus: "There are two states or conditions of pride. The first is one of self-approval, the second is one of self-contempt. Pride is seen probably at its purest in the last." It is the second of these states that we purpose to dwell on: the first is apparent enough and needs no comment, because it already has many commentators.

What constitutes the greatest difficulty in detecting this form of spiritual pride is that it covers itself with humility as with a garment. A certain doctrine of exaggerated and unnatural lowliness affords it a refuge, and provides for it a phraseology of excessive meekness, utter self-distrust, and abject self-abasement, in which it securely hides. The very denunciations of pride seem to veil the evil itself; and often those who are loudest in their repudiation of it, and in their praises

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of humility, are, all unknown to themselves, the most self-complacent and arrogant; the most imbued with a sense of spiritual superiority. In fact, this impracticable theory of humility becomes itself the occasion for pride, and these words of the poet are verified—

“Proud I am my wants to see,
Proud of my humility.”

The beautiful grace of humility is destroyed by an exaggeration of it which amounts to distortion, for—

“Best things perish of their own excess,
And quality o’erdriven becomes defeat.”

The kind of humility demanded being unnatural and impossible, and therefore unattainable, pride takes its place and masquerades in its dress.

Jesus combated both these kinds of spiritual pride in the religious people of His day; but it was chiefly in the open, more apparent form of self-approval that He met with it in the Scribes and Pharisees. Christianity has, however, for centuries past, waged war against this form of the evil and

made it so hateful that in order to exist at all it has had to put on the disguise of a mock humility, a sentimental lowliness. Therefore it is the second state, or condition, of pride—namely, that of self-contempt—which is the bane of modern religious life. It is to be found more or less in all religious circles, but its principal stronghold, perhaps, is among those who have known the privilege of that spiritual illumination and regeneration which we spoke of in the preceding chapter as “Conversion.” A world of pride may often lurk undetected in the very terms of self-abasement, and in confessions of sin, depravity, and incapacity, that could not find a hiding-place elsewhere.

Another of the faults of this privileged class is an *unprogressive spirit*. This may be almost invariably traced to pride—to a satisfaction in present attainment that makes further progress appear needless. To the Scribes and Pharisees Jesus said, “Ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered.” As He looked around upon the vast multitudes of the poor

and humble, to whom His words might have been the bread of life, He was moved with anger against these self-satisfied, jealous leaders, who were for ever stepping in between Him and the hungry multitude, and planting suspicion and distrust towards Him in their hearts, which weakened His power to bless and save.

“Ye have taken away the key of knowledge.” Well might the same be said of many religious leaders of the present day in all sections of the Church. We confine ourselves, however, to those among the privileged class with which we are dealing. Here we constantly come across men and women whose pride and blindness can easily be detected in the attitude their mind assumes towards teachers of deeper religious truths than their own, and towards progress along any path except the one recognised and advocated by themselves. They exhibit a spirit of intolerance towards further light, and an unwillingness to face fairly and squarely new aspects of truth. The tendency is, rather, to stifle these, to suppress anything in fact that might disturb the complacent sense of

self-satisfaction in their own privileges and attainments by revealing higher planes of life, knowledge, and power.

This is the attitude that met and opposed Christ, and eventually crucified Him. This is the attitude that slew the prophets before Him. This is the attitude that persecutes every soul in the community that rises above the ordinary level, and says, "Let us go on to higher things."

It is this unprogressive spirit in leaders and teachers that scares back with phantoms of error and warnings of heterodoxy the more humble-hearted and aspiring yet timid ones who would otherwise go forward and prosper. It is this same spirit that provides plausible excuses for the lazy and slothful, who shrink from facing the new situations and overcoming the new difficulties that attend progress. They are glad to find it a virtue rather than a vice to go round and round the old treadmill of opinions and theories, and to regard it with complacency as a faithful adherence to the old paths. Ah! this unprogressive spirit of pride commits cruelties now that differ only from the

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persecutions of former days in the greater refinement of the forms they take. It crucifies its saviours and prophets just as surely as the Jews did of old.

He who once cried in the streets of Jerusalem, "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees," and denounced them as "blind leaders of the blind," might well, from His high and holy place, be still pronouncing the same judgment on modern Scribes and Pharisees. Many there are who, like those of old, abuse the positions of authority they occupy by hindering all over whom they exercise influence or control from stepping out beyond their own meagre teaching into fuller light and truth, who, when they cannot themselves lead to fountains of living waters, will not stand aside and let thirsting souls pass on. .

Yea, woe indeed to them for their selfishness and pride and love of power; but all praise and honour to those leaders who are indeed the leaders of their people—ever the first in all right and holy enterprises, pioneers in every sphere of blessing and enrichment, explorers of new paths of progress, who brave its dangers and undertake its hardships, going

ahead to clear the way for the eager, stumbling, needy ones who follow. There is no grander sight than the progressive leader—brave, cautious, strong—of a progressive people, no sadder sight than the obstinate, self-satisfied, stationary head of a stagnating community. It is among such communities, and emphasised in their leaders and teachers, that we find pride flourishing in many guises, and chiefly that of humility. Nor need we wonder at the subtle spiritual deterioration that accompanies it, for “Perpetual growth and expansion can alone avert decay.”

But even while there is nothing but condemnation for the unprogressive spirit of pride, a tender sympathy is due from all advancing souls towards the timid, who hold back because they fear to fall into error; or the cautious, who must test every step before they take it. The conservative spirit that only waits to make sure, eventually goes forward nobly; but the proud, self-satisfied spirit never does—it remains stationary.

This great evil of stagnation, resulting to a great extent from the unprogressiveness of pride—is such an insidious one; it creeps

into the individual soul, or the community, unawares; it comes so gradually, and from such unexpected quarters, that watchfulness is disarmed. For instance, when a great spiritual awakening has come to a man, it sets him upon a new path of spiritual development, and necessitates new conquests in the realm of his own character, as well as in the hearts and minds of those whom he would benefit by his newly acquired blessings and powers. He goes forward bravely—fighting and overcoming fear, selfish or timid reserve, pride, weakness, evil, in himself, and opposition and blindness in others. It is a great battle, and great benefits accrue to his own character through the conflict,—he becomes strong, brave, zealous, and helpful.

In time, however, the difficulties that faced him at the outset are surmounted; those particular sins and weaknesses that he had perceived and set himself to conquer have yielded to earnest, enthusiastic faith and effort; a new plane of character has been reached. The very fear of man's scorn and criticism has gone—or, if it still exists in some degree, it is more than compensated for

by the applause and approval of friends. A kind of self-satisfaction now begins to creep into the soul, disguised in the garb of humility; a complacent sense of making the most of his life, and of doing great things for his neighbours, replaces the aspiration and strenuousness of old days. Self-sacrifices there has almost ceased to be any need for, because the hardships of the past are the pleasures of to-day. Many former foes have been changed into admiring friends and disciples. The man stands as victor on a pinnacle of power and achievement. His own heart whispers this to him, and others loudly proclaim it; and it is true.

But now comes the crisis. Will he go on to fresh achievements, or will he settle down comfortably to enjoy the fruits of this? The whole future depends upon his action now.

This is, alas! the time that stagnation so often creeps in; this is the time to watch and pray. "In all times of our wealth, good Lord, deliver us!" After a great victory comes the temptation to lapse into spiritual luxuriousness and ease. Conscious of past success, the soul throws off its armour and

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lays aside its weapons, and, contenting itself with lower standards, refuses to enter upon the struggle for further successes. Then that soul's horizon gets bounded, its sphere is narrowed, its ideals fade, its wings of aspiration are clipped. A certain stereotyped set of ideas, religious and moral, replaces the once limitless hopes and aspirations, a religious phraseology is adopted, and the work begins to run in some approved and well-worn rut. What was once beautiful, because it was living and growing, has become dull and dingy and dreary—a dead form, a mere semblance of the vigorous life that used to be for ever striving after shining goals.

In the train of just such a spiritual condition comes the intolerance, the pharisaism, the covert pride to which we have just been alluding. Stagnation hates nothing so much as progress, fearing lest its own self-satisfied repose be broken by the surge of human hearts pressing onwards.

Privilege is indeed a great exactor. To have stood in the place of open vision, to have not only seen new heights, but also to have been endowed with power to climb

them, is an experience that brings a great and awful responsibility, for "each chamber unlocked reveals a wider, richer treasury beyond"; and "to whom much is given, of him shall much be required." Great is the danger of being lifted to a higher plane of spiritual light and power than our brethren if we fail to use that privilege as the vantage ground for yet further victories. The stern judgment of stagnation overtakes such souls. Safety only lies in progress—in the excelsior spirit which sings as it presses on :

"I'm pressing on the upward way,
New heights I'm gaining day by day,
Still praying as I onward bound,
Lord, plant my feet on higher ground."

"Perpetual growth and expansion can alone avert decay." We have to face a stern fact, and it is this : as soon as ever any phase of life or duty that was once difficult has, from faithful self-discipline and constant practice, become easy, and no longer makes demands upon our heroism or unselfishness or strength, it is time for us *to go on*. Some still higher plane of life and duty awaits us, where we must put forth again, more perfectly, those

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same qualities under new conditions and circumstances. There is no safe halting-place for human souls on earth. "Ye have dwelt long enough in this mountain: turn you and take your journey." That command given to the Israelites of old is the very command needed by their antitypes in these days. The tendency to dwell on some mount which we have climbed, to build tabernacles there, and cut short our journey to perfection is as great a temptation now as it ever was. It is perseverance that is lacking—"Perseverance," which, as Shakespeare says :

"Keeps honour bright; to have done is to hang
Quite out of fashion, like a rusty nail,
In monumental mockery.

Another fault of the religiously gifted which is but little recognised or dealt with we must, for lack of a single word to describe it, express in a phrase as *the tendency to live only on the inspired side of life*. So strong is this tendency that when called upon to go through the disciplinary phases of unilluminated, uninspired drudgery and plod, the danger of a religious break-down is often

imminent. The fact is that having once experienced the energising power of a great spiritual inspiration and uplift, the facility it affords and the effort it saves, there is naturally a great desire, ever after, to avoid undertaking any of the difficult tasks of life without the aid of this stimulus. The soul expects always to be carried on waves of ecstasy and emotion through irksome duties and trying circumstances, and waits for these before taking action.

In some few cases this attitude may be due to a certain lofty ideal of faith and dependence on God, but in most cases it degenerates into the laziness that will not attempt anything that does not come easily and naturally. The place of industry and effort in the religious life is neither understood nor accorded its right place. When, for instance, some case comes up in which an individual or a community is called upon to judge and decide a difficult question which demands thought and deliberation, a careful weighing of facts and evidences, and a minute application of the mind to details,—all this labour being irksome, those who have once known

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the experience of arriving at illumination by the way of faith and without this toil, seek in this and every case to do likewise. There is a tendency not to give the matter in hand the careful, honest attention that it demands, and to substitute prayer instead, thereby escaping from the necessity of toil and action. Many, while praying earnestly for Divine illumination, are all the while neglecting the very obvious means of arriving at a right judgment. Often grave wrongs and injustices are thus committed by individuals and communities. Their minds being fixed on the one method of guidance, they frequently mistake an impression or a passing emotion for an indication of God's will, causing, thereby, infinite trouble and distress. Persecutions and injustices, great and small, may often be traced back to this faulty conception of Divine guidance. The fact is that God will not encourage laziness, nor permit any neglect of faculties that He has provided for purposes of deliberation and judgment; and therefore He often allows those who set them aside to fall into illusions and mistakes in order that, either by the vicarious sufferings

of others—the victims of the mistake—or through loss and pain in their own lives, they may be brought to see the evil consequences of this one-sided development. In this matter of arriving at right judgments, faith undoubtedly has a large share, but thought and reason also have their part; and to neglect the latter and depend only on the former is a mistake that brings a sure punishment through the working out of the eternal laws of cause and effect.

Innumerable instances of this same fault might be cited, but just one more will suffice to make plain its nature. Something is wrong in a man's business, domestic, or social relations, or in his religious life; the wheels do not run smoothly, there is jar and fret and friction. He betakes himself to prayer, and earnestly implores Heaven that by some superhuman intervention the trial may be removed, the difficulty adjusted. All the while it is his action on which everything depends. The matter needs to be carefully looked into; the point where the dislocation occurs has to be discovered; the application of means to ends to be persevered in before

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satisfactory results can be expected. Only to patient thought, labour, self-sacrifice, will the difficulty yield ; and to flee from these, taking refuge in prayer from a sense of responsibility regarding the matter, is often an unrecognised form of indolence. Prayer there should be—earnest prayer that all the faculties of judging, reasoning, discerning, may be quickened and strengthened to deal with the difficult problem ; but to resort to prayer and faith as a means of escaping toil and the exercise of God-given powers, is to court failure and disaster.

XII

**THE PROBLEM OF THE RELIGIOUSLY
INSPIRED**

CHAPTER XII

THE PROBLEM OF THE RELIGIOUSLY INSPIRED

"He that is spiritual discerneth all things."—*New Testament.*

"The practical master of the two worlds—the Inner and the Outer, the Subjective and the Objective."—ARTHUR LOVELL.

"The spiritual man is the only complete and thorough man."—PHILLIPS BROOKS.

THE saint is always standing face to face with a problem. Two apparently conflicting claims—claims made on him both by God and by man—meet him at every step. One of these is a demand for practical goodness and wisdom as regards the earthly and temporal life; and the other a call for spiritual development of a high order. On the one hand he must stand, by example and precept, for a religion that deals with the ordinary, everyday affairs of man's objective

existence, ordering and controlling his business, his home, his toils, his cares, and making all that side of life religious. On the other hand, he is required to be at home in the unseen realm of faith, to learn its secrets, to teach its laws, and to demonstrate its powers.

The demand is a great one. How to be both practical and spiritual is a serious problem of the religious life.

In the literary world it is a common occurrence to find the poet or the man of letters a failure in other departments of life and work. There is an exact parallel to this in the case of those religiously privileged beings who, having at some time experienced a great quickening of their spiritual nature, tend to sacrifice all other departments of life and character to the culture of this; forgetting that their very calling requires of them holiness, or *wholeness*.

It is, we repeat, a great demand, but evidently not an impossible one, since God and the human heart unite in making it. The saint, however, conscious of his limitations, gives up the effort to combine both,

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and chooses the one or the other. Thus it is that we find two entirely different classes of religious people in our communities: those who culture the practical, and those who culture the spiritual side of human nature. When the latter course is adopted there is a tendency to disparage the intellect; to ignore as far as possible the things of time and sense, and to withdraw all interest from the ordinary affairs of life—attending to them perfunctorily and superficially when necessity demands it. The whole heart goes into the spiritual department, and only the events and incidents belonging to that realm have any real interest. The result is a one-sided and unnatural life: great fervour, deep emotions, and a degree of spiritual power in a certain direction; but no symmetry, or strength, or wisdom in ordinary affairs. The entire energy has run into one channel, causing a separation of the spiritual from the rest of life, and leaving the nature uncultured and unsympathetic in all save this one department. This is the reason why the fervently religious are so often incapable of response to purely human emotions of

pleasure or pain, and seem to live apart from all earthly needs, interests, and pursuits. They appear to be conscious solely of their spiritual life, hence they are able to relate themselves only to man's *spirit*.

Alongside this spiritual asceticism, which we have just described, is an opposite religious tendency. Some earnest souls, while seeking to avoid one error fall into another; and setting aside the deeper and more mystical aspects of their faith, decide to live entirely on the objective plane, and devote themselves to practical morality and benevolence in the ordinary affairs of life. And, while they gain in one direction, they lose immeasurably in another. Nor are either of these classes at peace with regard to their choice. Those who have decided on, or been driven by necessity into, paths of busy, practical activity are constantly haunted by the reproving spectre of another life—the life of thought and meditation; whilst those who have taken that inner mystical department as the object of their special care and culture, are from time to time troubled by the demands of the neglected objective existence. Both

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classes, going along their appointed paths—the one in the direction of spiritual and the other in the direction of practical development—are subjected to constant conscience-pricks and complaints from the part of their nature that they are ignoring or repressing; nor can this unrest and discontent cease until these two opposite sides of life are harmonised, and the true ideal reached. That ideal, to use the words of Arthur Lovell, is that man should be “the practical master of the two worlds—the Inner and the Outer, the Subjective and the Objective.” This is exactly what Jesus showed us. He worked out the problem for us in His own life, and seeks to impart its secret to those who have “ears to hear.” If in the Great Representative of humanity these two opposite sides of life—the practical and the spiritual—were blended and exercised together, then for us too there must be a point where the objective and the subjective, the outer and the inner, meet and become mutually helpful instead of mutually destructive and obstructive. We too may surely, under the Divine guidance, come to a stage in our development where we find

that deep spirituality can consist with clear thinking and indefatigable doing; where reason and action may be friends, not foes, to the feeling and insight of faith.

But this point—where is it? How to reduce the complexity of human life to a great unity and simplicity, so that we can say, “This one thing I do,” and yet in that one thing find all things included,—herein lies the problem of the saint.

The solution of the problem, as traced out in the life of Jesus, appears to consist solely in the spiritualising of the *whole* life of man, that is, in the bringing of his entire being—will, intellect, senses—under the control and guidance of his spirit. It is, in fact, to re-instate the spirit in its place of rule and supremacy over the rest of man’s nature. This does not involve a crushing and ignoring of other departments of his being, but merely a bringing of them under the sway of the spirit, and thereby enabling them to reach their highest perfection. It is an adjustment, a restoration of right relations in the kingdom of man’s threefold nature. In some cases the body, in others the intellect, has

usurped the throne of being which belongs to the spirit; and only by placing the rightful sovereign once more upon that throne can confusion and anarchy be overcome and peace restored. Spirituality in its highest development is not asceticism, though asceticism may be a temporary and partial means to that end. The method of those who aim at spirituality by isolating the spiritual department of life from every other, and, ignoring the claims of the intellect and senses, making the spirit the sole object of their culture, is not the method of Jesus. He showed us that only by bringing the spheres of thought and action into the realm of spirituality, by placing them under the dominion and guidance of the spirit, can we put an end to the civil war that devastates man's being, and sets up one part in opposition to another. Phillips Brooks says, "To live in the Spirit is to live in the obedience and communion of that Father of spirits in whom the flesh is always the servant of the soul and the circumstances of the character. The spiritual man is the only complete and thorough man." Thus alone that unity and simplicity, that integration

and co-operation of his whole nature can be attained.

Much confusion arises from a misconception of the word *spiritual*. *Spiritual* does not primarily mean *religious*, but merely that which pertains to spirit—the spirit of *anything*. The word has, however, in theological phraseology come to be synonymous with *religious*, because of the close connection between the deepest religion and the highest spirituality. But let us return for a while to the original meaning, which is, “*the vital or essential part of anything*.” Emerson says, “In our definitions we grope after the *spiritual* by describing it as invisible. The true meaning of *spiritual* is *real*.”

In every act there are two parts—the essence and the outward form, the spirit and the body, the appearance and the *reality*. It is the heart and core of anything, whether it be of a person, or an act, or a relationship, or a duty, that is *the spirit*. “The spiritual man,” says Phillips Brooks, “is in the heart and soul of things”; he goes straight to the centre, and discovers the animating principle of every circumstance of life and work; he

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lives ever as "seeing that which is invisible" in the most ordinary events, duties, and recreations of each day; he lays hold of the spirit or vital essence of all life—religious, social, domestic, and commercial—and thereby spiritualises the whole.

Again, our conception of *spirituality* is at fault. We speak of it as if it pertained only to the activity of the spirit in a certain direction, namely, that of the unseen and immaterial, the occult, and mystical, whereas true spirituality acts just as powerfully in the domain of the visible and tangible, and has just as much to do with the buying of a house as with an act of prayer or worship. Spirituality is the faculty of penetrating to the heart of a thing, of getting at the *reality* beneath the outer forms and shows of it. There is a man who feels and sees an attitude of mind, or perceives an evil or an error, though it is disguised in words and deeds of a totally different character. This is spirituality; it is an exercise of *spiritual* perception. To have been deceived by the outward appearance would have revealed lack of spirituality. Then there is the man who devotes his whole

life to the doing of what he describes as "spiritual work," by which he means work relating to the unseen and mystical spheres of religious life; but never once does he get a glimpse into the *true* nature of the God he represents, or the human being he seeks to uplift, or the mysteries he professes to impart. It is merely with the outer region, the upper stratum of all life, that he deals. His work may be excellent and beneficial so far as it goes; but it is not *spiritual*, because it does not touch the heart, the centre. Another man, forced to live perpetually on the practical side of life and be occupied with earthly and mundane affairs, pierces to the heart and core of them, seeing in the daily toil a dignity and sweetness that its outward form does not wear, and an opportunity for subjective culture, for religious and spiritual service to his fellow men, that its superficial aspect by no means promised. This is a *spiritual* man.

To make life *spiritual* is more than to make it *religious*. We may dig and delve, or transact business, or preach sermons, or train children, not merely religiously, but

also spiritually—that is, not only with reference to certain Divine laws and commands pertaining to the outer life, but also with reference to the spirit or inner principle of all these deeds. This last is *spiritual religion*, and the highest form of religion. Many succeed in making the objective and practical side of life *religious*—that is, bringing it under the control and direction of God; but very few arrive at raising it, and the whole being, with its varied activities, on to a spiritual plane.

To return again to our definition of *spirit*. Arthur Lovell, in his book on "Concentration," speaks of it as "the point" or apex of a thing. In describing "a point," he says: "For our present purpose the only satisfactory definition is furnished by geometry. A point is that which has no parts. This is equivalent to saying that a point is what has no length, breadth, or thickness; in other words, that which does not occupy space or time . . . a something different from nature. According to the verdict of the great teachers of humanity, that which is different from nature, and does not occupy space or time,

is spirit. . . . This point is the absolute centre of the universe. It is everywhere and nowhere . . . it is the solid foundation on which rests the whole edifice of Nature."

This description of spirit as "the point" or centre, the living principle, emphasises what we have already said—namely, that in every act, or state, there are these two aspects: the outer, having to do with time and space, and being therefore transitory in its nature; and the *inner*, or spiritual, which is limitless and eternal, outliving all the forms in which it clothes itself, and creating new ones to replace the old. There is an outward form, and there is a spirit to everything that we can do, say, or think.

The practical question for us is how we can attain to spirituality in all the affairs of life. The answer, given in divers ways and by widely differing minds, is always the same;—*by concentration*, say all the authorities on this subject. To quote again from Arthur Lovell: "Concentration on ultimate analysis is resolved into the state of being, or the act of bringing to, the 'mathematical point' of the spirit."

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Concentration there may be of many kinds, and exercised on divers objects ; but what is the nature of the simple and effective concentration which Christ taught and exemplified, and which is within the reach of the busiest man ? It is not the concentration only of the perceptive faculties on matters occult and unseen, but the devotion and application of the whole being to the work of finding, and living in, *the spirit* of any and every kind of life or duty that is the appointed lot. Heart, mind, and body may all engage in the undertaking, and all give to the task that which it demands from each separate sphere. Thus we see that there is no circumstance of life that may not become an opportunity for the culture of spirituality.

Concentration leads to wealth, to the possession and enjoyment of the riches of God in His universe. No act can be done without reference to its inner nature or principle, without that nature revealing itself to the doer, entering into him and becoming his for ever. It may be merely that a man gives himself up to concentrated effort upon some business matter or difficult calculation or



puzzling problem. By this faithful application to his task he gets at its spirit or inner principle, practises its laws, and reaps a rich harvest of knowledge, delight, and power from what was once irksome and difficult. Ever after he and that work are *friends*; it has revealed its secrets to him, and conferred great benefits upon him. His character has been permanently enriched.

Thus it is that the spiritual man, without going out of his ordinary path of duty, comes into intelligent comprehension of, and sympathetic touch with, one department after another of human life and experience, thus enlarging his spiritual borders and increasing his spiritual wealth day by day. This surely was the secret of the Master's living, loving fellowship with all the universe and His intimate knowledge of its laws. Here too He is our example.

But this is not the only gain. A man's act of concentration reacts upon himself and increases his power to concentrate, making the next act of concentration easier. Moreover, that power acquired and faithfully exercised on the objective plane, in "the

common round, the daily task," is available for use in higher regions and in matters of faith. Once educated it can be as easily applied to deep religious or intellectual problems as to ordinary affairs: the power itself is one and the same.

Thus we see that the objective life does not interfere with culture of spirituality; on the contrary, it may often afford the best opportunity for developing a power of concentration strong enough to carry us to the very heart of spiritual religion. Whilst occupied in earthly pursuits it is possible all the time to be "sowing to the spirit," to be living with reference to the inner, rather than the outer, nature and effect of our deeds.

And this reminds us of a yet further reward of spirituality. Professor Drummond says, "Acts react upon souls." Certain it is that every act done *spiritually*—that is, with reference not so much to its outer as to its deep inner advantages, rebounds in spiritual blessing upon the doer. To do a strong, brave act, looking not merely to the outward peace and prosperity that it will bring, but the inner strength and stability it will create and

establish, is to walk seeing the spiritual. To realise that faithfulness in uncongenial tasks begets, or increases, the quality of faithfulness *in the soul*, is to have the eye fixed on the eternal and invisible. To understand that every virtue we practise—love, generosity, honesty—has not only its outer, but its inner results; and besides the temporal blessing it imparts has also the spiritual effect of creating character in the doer and the beholder,—that is *spiritual* wisdom.

The reason so few reach this exalted plane of spirit in their earthly or heavenly associations is because serious application is lacking: deep, earnest, concentrated effort has not yet been brought to bear upon life's problems, and the spiritual element in the universe will yield to nothing else. Only to persevering industry does *the spirit* that is in God, or men, or things, reveal itself. If we would know God in His deeper nature, spirituality is the one essential condition. Jesus said, "God is a spirit; and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." Now there is a great deal of prayer and praise, and fervent, enthusiastic religion

! that is emotional and not spiritual, though it may wear a semblance of spirituality. Its conception of spirituality consists, as we have already said, in separation, as far as is possible, from the objective life, and a cultivation of the reflective and emotional faculties. Jesus separated Himself from nothing in the universe except sin. His sympathies and interests went out into all the world. He entered into, and mastered, the spirit of every earthly and heavenly relationship and duty; and going thus to the roots of things, He discovered in them all a wondrous beauty and dignity, and found them to be revelations of God. It is Phillips Brooks who says that every experience thus used becomes "an eye with which to see God."

What a comfort there is in this thought to the man who wants, in a very deep sense, to find God and commune with Him, and yet feels himself held in the unrelenting grip of a busy life on the objective plane! To think that such a life may also be a ladder up to God and spirituality—as good a ladder as meditation or reflection—what hope in this for earth's busy toiler! How this opens the

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way for the office-clerk or the labourer to become as great in the kingdom of heaven as the most favoured ecclesiastic! The humblest individual who thoroughly throws himself into his daily work, and plods away at irksome tasks—breaking through the hard, ugly outer crust of them and getting to the core—compels them to yield up their secret and reveal their *spirit*; and that spirit has its source in God. Thus to God he slowly but surely comes. Each step along this path brings him nearer to the heart of God, for in that heart all earthly duties and relationships and activities have their rise: He is the Author of them all.

Thus is the saint's problem solved. Only by lifting his *whole* nature and his *entire* life on to the spiritual plane can he become "the practical master of the two worlds—the Inner and the Outer, the Subjective and the Objective."

XIII
THE WORK OF THE RELIGIOUSLY
INSPIRED

CHAPTER XIII

THE WORK OF THE RELIGIOUSLY INSPIRED

"One main lesson . . . the necessity of taking account of the fulness and variety of life in our endeavours to hasten the kingdom of God. . . . We need to recognise the boundless complexity of life: the many factors which must contribute to its completeness. . . . We are not placed in the world to essay the vain task of creating humanity afresh. Our part is to learn its capacities, its tendencies, its position, its destiny, and, in the strength and by the light of the Incarnation, to strive unrestingly to bring it a little nearer to its goal."—WESCOTT.

" . . . Striving according to His working, which worketh in me mightily."—ST. PAUL.

THE work of the Religiously Inspired, as described by themselves, is primarily the work of *saving souls*. In connection with this—either as a means to, or a result of, it—comes in much philanthropy; and many methods and agencies are employed for the benefit of man's moral, intellectual and physical condition. These are not, however,

ends in themselves, but are valued chiefly as aids to the achievement of a supreme object — designated in popular religious phraseology as the *salvation of souls*.

What is the conception of salvation as held by this school of religious thought?

Examined carefully it will be found that *the awakening of a sense of God, and of a certain relationship to Him*, constitute the main features of this idea of soul-saving work. The Religiously Inspired, having been themselves illumined and quickened in their inner consciousness, seek for mankind a similar blessing ; and the attainment of a like experience they call salvation—saying of one in whom the God-consciousness has just dawned, “He is a saved man,” or of another, who is yet a babe in virtue and character, “He has received salvation.” It is clear, then, that a certain experience which is a vivid reality—how vivid only those know who have had it—is regarded as salvation, and the whole of salvation. Whatever of goodness or virtue may follow this experience is not looked upon as in any sense a *part* of the salvation, but merely as a result or

consequence of it, the overflowings of a grateful heart. Whatever of weakness or failure may manifest itself in a subject of this experience does not in any way affect the question of that salvation, which was received in its entirety by the soul on a memorable occasion which it terms "conversion." Whether good or bad, weak or strong, the man who has once experienced this wondrous illumination of the spiritual consciousness is a "saved" soul. He is taught to regard the work of his salvation as "finished"; nothing can be added to it or taken away from it. Salvation was received by faith as a free unmerited gift, and must ever remain so. To seek it on any other terms, especially those of personal desert or effort, is to be guilty of pride. The whole idea of salvation, as held by this school, is described by Cowper, who is peculiarly its poet and champion. Referring to what is commonly known by this community as "the plan of salvation," he says:

"Oh, how unlike the complex works of man,
Heaven's easy, artless, unencumbered plan!
No meretricious graces to beguile,
No clustering ornaments to clog the pile;

From ostentation as from weakness free,
It stands like the cerulean arch we see,
Majestic in its own simplicity.
Inscribed above the portal from afar,
Conspicuous as the brightness of a star,
Legible only by the light they give,
Stand the soul-quickenings words—Believe and Live.
Too many, shocked at what should charm them most,
Despise the plain direction and are lost.
Heaven on such terms! they cry with proud disdain,
Rebel because 'tis easy to obey,
And scorn for its own sake the gracious way.

The plea of works, as arrogant as vain,
Heaven turns from with abhorrence and disdain,
Not more affronted by avowed neglect
Than by the mere dissembler's feigned respect.
What is all righteousness that men devise,
What, but a sordid bargain for the skies?
But Christ as soon would abdicate His own
As stoop from heaven to sell the proud a throne."

This briefly sums up the idea of salvation as found in an important section of the religious community, and graphically depicts its horror of "works" as a means of salvation.

Diametrically opposed to this is another school, which, scoffing in its turn at the idea of a salvation attained by faith alone, seeks to work it out by human effort and perseverance, and by the observance of religious rites and ceremonies.

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Each of these classes regards the other as its enemy, and, seeing only the weakness of the opposite side and the strength of its own, thinks itself to be alone the exponent of God's truth regarding the way of salvation. The fact that both these views are held and championed by sincere and earnest men is a guarantee that both are needed in the world. Ideas which have no truth in them have no power either, and drop off in time and die. The fact that men contend earnestly for a certain aspect of religious belief is a proof that it is vital and useful. Each of these views has in it, along with some mistakes and errors, a deep and abiding truth; and therefore we welcome any conception of the scheme of salvation which reconciles and harmonises them. Such a conception there is; and it is slowly but surely gaining ground in all religious circles. In both the partial and fragmentary views just referred to, salvation is conceived of primarily as a deliverance from the guilt and punishment of sin, which gives the soul a right to heaven. This deliverance is attained, in the one case, by a system of faith, in the other by a system

of works. The larger view which we have referred to holds salvation to be a deliverance from sin itself and a conquest of human weakness. This view we cannot do better than give in Dr. John Hunter's words. He says: "The salvation of Jesus Christ is indeed a great salvation—far greater than most men have ever thought or imagined. It means a large and many-sided experience; the highest quality and order of human life, the highest character and blessedness which men individually and collectively are capable of reaching and realising. . . . Christian character is not an incident, a result, a test of salvation—it is Salvation. Salvation is character. We speak glibly enough at times about saving souls—but what is the soul but true and complete self-hood, the living man in his entirety. To save a soul is to save a man in every faculty of his complex being and every province of his many-sided life. The saved man is the whole man; the healthily and fully developed man; man at his best and highest. The work of salvation is meant to be not so much a work by itself as a work

large enough to take in every other work—the work of life.”

Regarded in the light of this larger and completer view of salvation, both the fragmentary views we have stated are seen to contain a great truth. The first, standing as it does for *God's part* of the work, does well to insist on the absolute freedom of the gift of spiritual illumination and of the miracle of an awakened God-consciousness; to proclaim the message that light and life flow, all-unmerited, from on high into souls made receptive by faith. For this portion of the soul-saving work human efforts and struggles are not needed; the attitude of quiet expectation is the only right one. But this is only a part of the salvation; it is merely an awakening of the spiritual consciousness. Other steps and stages in religious development must follow, for which a different attitude of heart will be needed—often the active rather than the passive; and it is here that the other school of thought, which stands for man's co-operation in the work of his salvation, finds its place. It is the doctrine of faith and the doctrine of human co-operation

combined that bring a soul into its glorious inheritance of complete redemption ; apart, they each realise only a partial and one-sided result. How familiar we are with the spectacle of an earnest man striving after a realisation of God and goodness, and yet striving ineffectually and feebly because he cannot, or will not, believe, and therefore cannot, or will not, receive an inflow of Divine life and power, which, coming to him irrespective of his own merits or attainments, would lift him to a higher plane and crown his efforts with success. On the other hand, just as often, we see illumined souls rejoicing in the free gift of faith and vision, but refusing to put forth their own powers and co-operate with God ; preferring to wait for the coming upon them of a power outside themselves—looking perpetually for an inflow of Divine inspiration, and suspending action in its absence.

Realising the fact that it is to the narrowness of these views of salvation that we may trace the great flaw in soul-saving work, we would naturally look for the remedy in a larger conception of the nature and scope of salvation. Writing specially from the

standpoint of the Religiously Inspired, we would say that such a conception is consistent with the utmost loyalty to the great truth of spiritual awakening and illumination by faith, of which *they* have been made by God the custodians and ambassadors. They cannot over-emphasise the need of this marvellous spiritual experience, nor are they wrong in insisting that as far as possible it should be the starting-point of all religious life. Those who begin with a vivid realisation of God and of their relationship to Him undoubtedly start on vantage ground, and are likely to attain to a larger measure of success than others. An intense consciousness of God has the effect of so rapidly quickening the faculties of heart and will and conscience as to seem miraculous.

In order to do a completer work the Religiously Inspired, realising that the whole nature of man, and not a fraction of it, is the true sphere of soul-saving activity, must not stop short at awakening, or even highly culturing, the faith-faculty, but must go on from that point to deal with the rest of man's nature, regenerating and building up the whole character. For instance, to make a man

righteous in the plain dictionary sense of the word, as well as in the theological sense, is a part of the work. To save him from the ~~crookedness of self-interest or fear~~, and to make him upright, is moral salvation. To rescue a wasted and neglected intellect, and turn it to good account in a good cause is intellectual salvation. To save hearts from hardness, and wills from feebleness, and lives from wreck and disaster, all constitute a part of the soul-saving work, which is wrought out not in one way alone, but in many—not by the illumination of faith only, but by personal effort and co-operation, and the action of reason and will also.

Then, too, there must be in the really efficient worker a readiness to fall in with the Divine order and method of working out man's salvation. Those who were themselves spiritually illumined at the outset of their religious life, find it difficult to relinquish the idea that salvation does not always, of necessity, begin at that point. God often chooses some other part of a man's nature, commencing sometimes with the conscience, sometimes with the will, sometimes with the

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emotions; the order varies infinitely. But eventually, the salvation, to be complete, must include all departments of human life and nature. Where it has begun with the will, it must go on to the spiritual consciousness; where it has begun at that point, it must presently extend to the will; and so on, until the whole being is quickened, regenerated, exalted.

Jesus said, "Whatsoever the Son seeth the Father doing, that doeth He likewise." This should also be the attitude of the religious worker. His observation should be keenly on the alert, seeking to discover what is the exact nature of the work that God is doing in individuals and communities, in which department of the life He is engaged, and what methods He is employing. Having made the discovery, he will be able to co-operate intelligently, sympathetically, and successfully. Often, when the spirit of a man is not yet ready for God's life-giving touch upon it, He prepares it by dealing first with other sides of the complex nature. Therefore the religious worker who is interested only in the purely spiritual awakening

and development of a human life loses innumerable opportunities of helping in much necessary and preliminary work. He wastes time and labour, battering persistently at a closed door, and wears out not himself alone, but also the object of his solicitude, who cannot yet receive his message. Religious workers have in this matter a great lesson to learn from the earthly life of Jesus. The Master related Himself to, and interested Himself in, not only man's *spirit* and its needs, but his entire nature and all the varied conditions and circumstances that belonged to it. The soul and body were objects of His tender and unceasing care as well as the spirit; and this not with a view, merely, to making them the means of benefiting the spirit, but because these other departments of human nature were valued and honoured for themselves. Therefore, out of His great treasure-house of sympathetic knowledge, Jesus was able to bring forth the appropriate supply for each human need He met; providing food and light, comfort and cheer, for heart and mind and body. Those who follow in His steps

as servants of humanity need to cultivate a wider sympathy with all aspects of human education. If they could acquire a greater sense of the value of the work that is being carried on in other departments of human life besides the spiritual, and by other means than those they employ; if they could also add to their conception of the scope and power of salvation, and to their methods of soul-saving work, all that may be gathered from other branches of the same service,—great indeed would be the gain. Then, in the worker's armoury there would be not only weapons of one kind, but of every kind, for the warfare with the varied evils that beset human salvation and growth. Instead of merely having at hand supplies for one set of wants, he would be able to meet all. The man who stood in need of a quickening touch upon his spirit would find him ready and able to help, so also would another who required to cultivate his will power, or his affections, or his sense of duty, or his perseverance. He could urge souls forward in the path of strenuous endeavour and the drudgery of faithful effort just as effectually as in that

of faith, or illumination, or enthusiasm. To all sorts and conditions of men, in all stages of growth, in all departments of life and work, and in every mood, he would have a divinely appropriate message and power to impart.

In the pressure of modern life this is the only kind of worker who is at all adequately equipped for the work of saving souls. One of the Rev. R. J. Campbell's correspondents in *The British Weekly* makes the remark that "for most men nowadays the burden of life is greater than the burden of sin." Men are groaning under this burden; they cannot spare time or thought for the burden of sin, because of that which immediately presses on them and engages their attention, shutting out all else. The cares and riches of this world bar the way to spiritual development.

To teach humanity how to get rid of this *burden* of life, and how to gain the freedom of a true and right adjustment to conditions and environments—to unfold to mankind the art of living and overcoming—is the highest form of service. But in order to do this there must be not only theories and precepts,

but a practical experimental knowledge *of how it is done*. The worker must himself have explored the paths in which he would lead other feet, or else he is "a blind leader of the blind"; he must himself have learned that which he would teach. Only in the measure that he has, by the power of religion, overcome sin and weakness, care and fret, distraction and confusion, can he help others to do the same. Only in so far as He has fathomed the full meaning of the gracious call, "Come unto Me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest," can he lead tired hearts and lives to that same source of rest and strength. Indeed, the very power to perceive human needs is dependent on personal achievement. The man who has not won strength of character cannot even see the want of it in another; he who has not cultivated perseverance in himself, or faith, nor disciplined his own life, will never perceive that it is from the lack of these very qualities that some life close beside him is failing and wasting its precious opportunities. To teach, one must have first perceived and then achieved.

What thoroughness, sympathy, wisdom, this necessitates in the worker! And these qualifications can only come as the result of a deep, far-reaching conquest in the realm of his own character and experience. He can only be a true physician of the ills and weakness of human nature in the degree that he has overcome them in himself. Therefore the great worker must first have been the great *overcomer*, for only the soul that has itself conquered can lead others to conquest—and that only along the paths where he is himself a victor. The power of a life-giving touch belongs alone to him who has conquered the encroachments and ravages of spiritual, moral, and physical disease and death in the realm of his own life.

Except to those who merely *play* at working—ministering thereby to their refinedly selfish desire to feel virtuous and useful and important—there are great sacrifices and dangers all along the path of service: sacrifices of what the heart holds dear, of cherished personal hopes and plans, opportunities of fame, worldly success, human applause; dangers to reputation, ease, peace of mind.

To contend for a higher standard of righteousness than the Church or the world recognises, to stand for more exalted principles, generally involves loneliness and heart-break, misunderstanding, misrepresentation, ostracism. It was so in the case of Jesus, and those "who follow Him the closest needs must walk alone."

A hand-to-hand conflict with unrecognised or resolutely-defended evil in a person or a society can only be undertaken by a hero. When friends desert, and enemies threaten, and events prove untoward, and faith is sorely tried, only a stout heart, trusting in the ultimate triumph of right, can come through the fire, wounded and weary maybe, but with undaunted spirit, bringing his unfurled banner with him to plant on now unresisting soil. It is easy enough afterwards for others to go with the multitude, to fight with a host for *established* principle. Wounds received in the cause *now* are glorious; applause compensates for loss; friendship, companionship, popularity, make the rough places smooth; but the true hero was the lonely man who first won for that principle this open recognition, and

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raised an army in its defence at infinite cost to himself.

These true saviours and healers of their brethren, following in the footsteps of Christ,—how great is their sphere, how Godlike their work! If they can but embrace it in its fulness and completeness, it is nothing less than the high privilege of being “workers together with God.” for the salvation of men.

XIV
THE VIRTUES OF THE RELIGIOUSLY
INSPIRED

CHAPTER XIV

THE VIRTUES OF THE RELIGIOUSLY INSPIRED

"Belief's fire, once in us,
Makes of all else mere stuff to show itself!
We penetrate our life with such a glow
As fire lends wood and iron.
Enthusiasm's the best thing, I repeat!"

BROWNING.

"Believe, and you will conquer!"—MAZZINI.

THE distinctive virtues of the Religiously Inspired—earnestness, enthusiasm, disinterested and unselfish zeal, untiring activity—have their source in an inspired faith, which is the parent virtue of them all.

In these qualities no other religious school surpasses this, though there is one now arising, which, built up out of the elements of strength and truth to be found in all the others, and retaining their virtues while discarding their errors, bids fair to outstrip the

champions of faith even on their own peculiar lines. We refer to that broader, deeper conception of Christianity that is now fighting its way to the front.

Before proceeding any further it must be recognised that these special virtues in the Religiously Inspired are not in any sense of a general or universal type. They are exercised in one main direction, and flow in a certain well-defined channel, the very narrowness of which increases their vigour and intensity, just as a river pent within a narrow, rocky bed is swifter and deeper for the limitation. And these qualities appear to grow best within the confines of a narrow creed.

The reason is obvious. To exercise over a broad area any faculty that is as yet in its infancy, limited in power and capacity, is to dissipate it and render it practically useless. To concentrate and focus it upon a single point is to increase its force and utility. No observant thinker can fail to note that the almost invariable result of an influx of broader views into a narrow-minded community is to throw many of its hitherto

energetic members into a state of confusion, to sap the springs of their energy and cripple their activities. The reason of this is that the broader principles touch *the motives* underlying the activity. For instance, if it be true that every one will not be eternally lost who is unable to endorse views and recount experiences hitherto supposed to be necessary to salvation, then there is no further object in enforcing that particular creed with such great ardour. And this limited creed being the only one, any lessening of its authority means loss of incentive, a maiming of the springs of action. Similarly, if it be once admitted that God works in other ways besides the one hitherto supposed to be His only method, it stands to reason that another blow is struck at the foundation which shakes the whole structure.

We do not wonder that this school of thought, like every other narrow one, regards with distrust and suspicion the encroachments of larger creeds. While we sympathise we cannot but see that such encroachments are inevitable and necessary. The flood-tide of a great, comprehensive, sympathetic

Christianity is rolling in on all sides, forcing its way through every creek and inlet, into every church and creed, and it will presently inundate the whole realm of theology.

The effect of this inundation will be to sweep away everything in the various schools of religious thought that is not founded on the rock of truth, and with it, alas! those virtues that are the outcome of illusion. Therefore it behoves those who would retain their loved and cherished creeds to reconstruct them on foundations that will stand the flood; and every creed that has exercised a power in human life is capable of being thus reconstructed. If hitherto it has stood partly on a basis of illusion, and grown strong and active thereon, how much more will this be the case when it is placed altogether upon unshakable foundations of truth and reality!

Before we turn to those virtues of the Religiously Inspired which are the offspring of their faith, let us examine the nature of the faith itself. It is strong and energetic, and exercised, as we would expect, mainly in the direction of spiritual development—the

illumination and regeneration of the human spirit, by an agency wholly Divine, being its object.

The Religiously Inspired represent the doctrine of faith in the scheme of salvation as no other section of the Church does. It is their calling and privilege to stand for the great experience of spiritual quickening which has already been described as the birth of *religious genius* in the heart of man. However small in degree and poor in quality this *in-breathed* life, it is, from first to last, totally different in its nature from all other forms of religious energy; it is indeed the awakening of genius in the sphere of religion—a living, breathing thing!

Of many of these examples and representatives of spiritual regeneration, Amiel says, "Faith is the plank that saves them. They know the meaning of the higher life; their soul is athirst for Heaven. Their opinions are defective, but their moral excellence is great; their intellect is full of darkness, but their soul is full of light. We scarcely know how to talk with them about the things of earth, but they are ripe and mature in

the things of the heart." And not Amiel alone, but many besides marvel at this unique faith. The extent to which it can be cultured, the deep devotion bestowed upon its culture, and the wonders wrought by its exercise, fill the pages of innumerable volumes in the library of the faith-life. "All things are possible to him that believeth" is the keynote, and a faith that "laughs at impossibilities" is the ideal.

We cannot thank God enough that He has provided devoted and faithful champions of the cause of faith; and that they are preserving and developing for us an element in the religious life which is its mainspring.

But while estimating the faith of the Religiously Inspired at its highest value, we cannot fail to see that it has its defects. These defects we find to be twofold. They consist first in the emphasising of a supposed antagonism between faith and human efforts; and secondly in limiting the range of activity ascribed to faith.

Let us take the first of these defects. It is the outcome of an only half-understood sense of danger—a very real danger. So

often the introduction into the activities of faith of any idea of the co-operation of human faculties serves as an excuse for transferring the confidence in God (which is the object of culture) to a confidence in man's own unaided efforts and struggles. This at once militates against the building up of a pure and vigorous faith. The narrowness therefore that shuts out the human element in the work of salvation is merely an attempt to safeguard a dangerous point; and with it, as such, we can well sympathise. Better far is it for mankind that faith should continue to exclude anything (however good in itself) that endangers its distinctive development and testimony than that we should, through a premature expansion, lose this valuable quality in the religious life.

Nevertheless, there are prophetic signs, visible everywhere, that lead us to expect in the not far distant future a great enlargement of the scope and power of faith. Cultured within narrow bounds and at the expense of other human faculties, faith grown strong and full will overleap these very barriers, and overrun the whole domain of life without

losing its own distinctive features and functions. It will permeate and leaven human life in every department, and thus do away with the second defect which we noted—namely, the limited range of faith's sphere of action. Henceforth faith, confident of its place and power, instead of fearing human co-operation as a foe to dependence on God, will take and harness it to its own chariot, and use it as an aid to its own growth and activity. Whereas in the past it deprecated the exercise of other human faculties in the sphere of religion, with a view to safeguarding the domain of faith, it will now seek to educate these very powers and make their development the sphere of its activity. The faith that was once devoted merely to the culture of the *spirit* will begin to operate in man's *whole nature*, waiting upon God to regenerate and inspire the reason and will, as earnestly as it once looked to Him for the quickening of the spirit. Faith it is that shall eventually raise all human powers to a higher plane; for what man's struggling and striving could not do for these powers, faith will effect. The intellect, strengthened by an

inflow of Divine energy through the avenue of faith, will accomplish unheard of feats; the will reinforced from on high by the same agency will be all-conquering. Instead of miracles wrought *without* human co-operation, faith will seek to work its miracles *by* means of human faculties. As faithfully as it once witnessed to God's power apart from man, will it, in the future, witness to His power exercised in and through man. Faith will soon be claiming every department of human nature as its field of action, and the whole being will partake in the benefits of its miracle-working power.

This larger view of faith is what St. Paul evidently had in mind when he described himself as "striving according to His (God's) working, which worketh in me mightily." He gave us a sample of how "faith wrought with his works, and by works was his faith made perfect." To that healthy inter-action does the world owe the vigorous, penetrating, constructive *intellect* of St. Paul.

The contention in the past has largely been due to a tendency to divorce faith (which is the link between God and man) from human

reason and energy. When the place of faith is once fully established and recognised, the conflict will cease, the defects will disappear, and the entire nature of man will be led up to its summit of perfection *by faith*. "To him that believeth" in the continual inflowing of Divine life into human hearts and minds and activities, nothing shall be impossible !

The first of the virtues mentioned as springing from the faith of the Religiously Inspired is an intense *earnestness*, a deep sense of the sacredness and responsibility of life, which acts as a wholesome leaven in a careless and thoughtless world. This earnestness, even when it deprecates harmless recreations and relaxations, and is strained almost to breaking point, is a better thing than the levity it seeks to counteract.

The second in our list of virtues is a remarkable religious *enthusiasm*. The peculiar quality of this enthusiasm is an ardour and freshness that are unparalleled elsewhere. Its fervour warms the coldest atmosphere; it is infectious in a marked degree; it endures under the keenest disappointments and survives

the deepest discouragements, springing from the grave of cherished hopes and desires ready for new activities. It is admirable, wonderful, Divine !

But in this virtue also is a flaw—the old defect of narrowness. That such a marvellous and exalted enthusiasm should be limited to a narrow range, and centre around only one set of doctrines and experiences, which, valuable and important as they are, touch but one side of human life, seems a pity. But we can afford to be patient. When the faith of the Religiously Inspired enlarges its borders, it will carry the enthusiasm along with it into a larger sphere, with results that shall be glorious.

The unselfish and disinterested *zeal* of the Religiously Inspired is as amazing as their enthusiasm. In no other class, religious or secular, is this quality so well exemplified as in this. The sacrifice of comfort, ease, worldly advantages, is a common occurrence. This sacrifice has for its object no personal gain in heaven or on earth, but is made simply for the sake of proclaiming a gospel of salvation by faith. Men and women in exalted

social positions count it nought but privilege to step down from their high places and work beside the labourer and the clerk. Nobles become evangelists, high-born ladies devote their lives to factory girls. Hard-working artisans, busy tradesmen, rejoice to give their scanty leisure to the great cause. The struggling poor put, with a joy that is pathetic and beautiful, their small savings, that could only be spared at the cost of deprivation and hardship to themselves, into the fund that sends forth ambassadors of "the good news." All this makes us realise how wonderful must be that good news which creates such fervent zeal!

We repeat again that the disinterestedness of this zeal is remarkable. While some sections of the Christian Church work for salvation, this section does not. According to its creed, the only salvation that it conceives of has already been received, and the effort to save others is its outcome. In any case, it could never be expected as a reward for merit, for the main tenet is that salvation is "a free gift."

Then, worldly advantages there are none;

for affluence and honour belong more to other branches of the Church than to this, which shares in a marked degree the misunderstanding and contempt that was Christ's earthly portion.

We realise that it is pure disinterested zeal indeed. Whatever of stagnation, and its attendant evils, may afterwards creep in, the motive for service was pure at its source.

Nevertheless, the zeal of the Religiously Inspired shares in the defect of the whole system. It is exercised mainly in one direction of human salvation. It despises and sets aside the culture of other sides of human nature, except in so far as that culture ministers to the *spirit's* growth.

Here too a weak point is being defended; and while the weakness continues it is better that the defences should remain, than that aught of value to the race should be wrecked or lost.

The weak point is this. It is easier at present for human nature to value intellect and energy than to value faith, and to deal with the seen than with the unseen. There is a tendency to lose sight of the subjective

side of life in the objective; therefore the wisdom of God has ordained a people who stand for the true importance of the spiritual, who, in their very zeal for this sphere of man's nature, despise and tread the others under-foot. The constructive part of their zeal is good, but the destructive element in it is a defect; perhaps an inevitable and excusable one under the present circumstances, when the spiritual is fighting for its life against rationalism and materialism.

When the spiritual shall have fully gained its victory, we look for this defect to disappear; in the meanwhile we welcome every individual representative of this school who anticipates that time by remedying this defect in his own case.

The last-named of the distinctive virtues of the Religiously Inspired is an indefatigable and aggressive *activity*, which has for its foundation no compulsion, no hard and rigid necessity, but is a joyful, voluntary dedication of time and strength and money to the service of mankind. When this aggressive energy branches out and covers a wider area, not of the world, but of man's

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nature, as it is preparing to do, the results it will realise in the perfecting of human character will be proportionately greater.

In the peculiar quality of this faith, which can nurture such virtues, is a great hope for coming days. We look forward to the time when, stripped of the illusions, the crude, childish theories that bolstered it in weakness, and freed from the narrow confines of the nursery that shielded it in immaturity, this faith, full-grown, shall come forth, leading a train of shining virtues, into a larger world to do a completer work.

XV

**LOVE THE CROWN OF RELIGIOUS
GENIUS**

CHAPTER XV

LOVE THE CROWN OF RELIGIOUS GENIUS

“And above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness.”—ST. PAUL.

“O Lord . . . send Thy Holy Ghost and pour into our hearts that most excellent gift of charity, the very bond of peace and of all virtues, without which whosoever liveth is counted dead before Thee.”

COLLECT FOR QUINQUAGESIMA SUNDAY.

LOVE is the crown of human perfection because it is the *unifying principle* that binds together and causes to cohere what would else be scattered and fragmentary. The Apostle Paul, after enumerating the virtues he coveted for the Colossians, adds, “And above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness”; or, as it is translated in the Twentieth Century New Testament, “Over all these” (the virtues) “put on love; for love, like a girdle, makes all complete.”

This idea of love as a unifying, integrating, and, therefore, a perfecting principle, is to be found whether we trace it in the individual or the social life.

There is much excellence in the world—in communities and in human character—which is marred and weakened because it is all broken up and scattered. One community stands for one set of virtues, another for a different set; and there is no link between them. A single character presents such a mass of contradictions as to baffle the best psychologists and give rise to theories of "multiplex personality." The wonder is—not that there should be various dispositions and traits in a single personality—but that there should be no connection between them, no cohesion among them. As Emerson says, "Our moods do not know each other." The loss of power thus entailed is enormous. A lack of unification in an individual character means lack of self-possession. The divided and scattered powers of the complex human life and character need to be bound up into a harmonious whole under one headship—that of an enlightened will. Jesus is to us the

only perfect example of this cementing principle in life. His personality was knit together into an absolute oneness, in which all the parts were related to each other.

The reason why love is the unifying principle of life is because it opens the understanding and clarifies the vision—only that which we truly love can we perfectly understand or plainly perceive. Amiel says, “To love is virtually to know.” Therefore love, by producing comprehension, is essential to union and harmony.

Let us trace how this integrating principle works out in the individual life. To love rightly one’s self surely leads to certain valuable results. Before proceeding, however, to deal with these let us clear the path of misunderstandings by stating the nature of a noble and justifiable self-love.

The Divine commands concerning love, as condensed and endorsed by Christ, run thus : “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God. . . . This is the great and first commandment. And a second, like unto it, is this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

“Thy neighbour *as thyself*”—this assumes

and countenances self-love of a very high order and makes it the standard of our love for humanity; bidding us aim at bringing our love for our fellow men up to the same level as our love for ourselves. The ideal set forth here is, surely, that of a disinterestedness complete enough to enable each individual to regard himself impartially as but one of that race of human beings he is to love. In this spirit, and freed from the tendency, on the one hand, to favour himself above the rest, and on the other hand to treat himself with an injustice and severity he would not inflict upon others—he comes in time to lose undue and disproportionate interest in his own person and affairs, and extends it over the lives of others.

The great conflict that has raged around this question of self-love has arisen out of a misconception of Christ's meaning. He never intended that we should tread self underfoot—as many sections of the Church are seeking to do—but merely that we should discipline and regulate it. In His discourses He addressed Himself to a *diseased* self-love—a greed of personal gain and glory. In

denouncing this unholy perversion it was befitting that His language should be stern and forcible; maybe it was even necessary, in order to get rid of the parasite of selfishness, to cut the corrupted tree of self-love down to its root, and let it spring up anew. But throughout the Gospels the Master's attitude, even when He inculcated the utmost self-denial and humility, was one that warranted the culture of a right self-love and self-reverence. Nothing He ever said or did could lead us to attribute to Him any other thought than that the personality committed to each man as his own peculiar charge was to be loved and cherished as much as any other personality he had to do with—nay, possibly a little more, since it was primarily made his care.

If we fail to provide for ourselves we fail in our duty to God, who gave us ourselves. And this applies not merely to matters of food, clothing, and shelter, but to every part of our complex life—the intellectual, moral, and spiritual, as well as the physical. Moreover, it is only in the proportion that a man is capable of discharging his duty to himself,

that he will prove capable of discharging it to others. To have learned to care for himself is to have learned to care for others. To have reverently studied and understood his own nature, to have found the secret of drawing near to, and communing with, *his inmost self*, is to have acquired the same power in relation to others. To have become a successful physician of his own ills and weaknesses involves the ability to heal his fellow men. To have discovered the art of living—of mastering his own conditions and adapting himself to his own environments—is to hold in his hand the knowledge and power to lead others in the same direction. To be tender-hearted to himself is to be tender-hearted to all—for the nature that is cruel to itself is sowing seeds of cruelty that will bear fruit beyond itself.

All this may appear startling to some, but we venture to urge that, if traced deep down beneath the superficial aspect of things, it will be found true. Indeed, a secret law is contained in the command, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." In the ultimate analysis it means that we cannot give our

neighbour a love greater in degree, or better in quality, than that which we are capable of for ourselves. There is an exalted self-culture which has altruism for its motive; it humbly begins at home, in order to fit itself for a wider sphere. Such self-culture is nobler, because wiser, than some of the wanton self-sacrifice that wins our applause.

To love one's self aright leads to the following results: an interest in, and reverence for, one's own complex nature; a study, and consequent knowledge, of it, and a desire for its best and highest development.

The degree of ignorance in individuals regarding that which none save God should know better—namely, their own nature and character—is amazing; and the mistakes in dealing with themselves that result from this culpable ignorance are the fruitful source of much misery and impotence. A thorough self-knowledge that can diagnose its own diseases—mental, moral, and spiritual,—gauge its own weaknesses, name its faults, analyse and truly estimate its powers, control and discipline its actions, is the great need of the individual life, without which many are

drifting like rudderless ships on the ocean of time. Tennyson truly says :

“Self-reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,
These three alone lead life to sovereign power.”

Much that has been said and written about self-denial has had the effect of leading men to regard it almost as an end in itself instead of as a means to an end, and that end sovereignty—not only hereafter, but here and now, in fellowship with Him who said, “I have overcome *the world*.” Self-contempt, self-torture, self-effacement—unnatural and mischievous—have been substituted for the noble self-discipline of the New Testament.

The great need of the present day is prophets who will raise the standard of an exalted and practical self-culture, undertaken for the sake of humanity, and issuing in a great subjective and objective conquest. We wait for men who, keeping ever before them the altruistic motive, will first become overcomers in the realm of their own life and character, and then go forth to teach the art and lead man to see that the true end of losing his life in self-denial is to find

it again in *self-possession* and power—to be held henceforth as a sacred charge from God for the benefit of humanity.

A question may here suggest itself as to the true place of self-sacrifice. That universal law which, intersecting every part of Nature, reaches its perfection in human life, culminating in voluntary self-surrender for the benefit of others, finds nowhere such ready obedience to its demands nor such wealth for its offerings as in the self-reverencing man—obedience, because he who in this sense values his life values other lives also; and wealth, because the more a man is, the richer his character and resources, the more he has to give. While such a man can never countenance wanton *waste* of personal life and power—sacrifice merely for the sake of sacrifice—there is no limit to his willingness for sacrifices that really benefit the race; and he goes to them with a joyousness that makes us realise how “Love is that which makes the word ‘sacrifice’ meaningless.”

But here again we see God’s care for the self-sacrificing soul. He who lays down his

life for his brethren receives it back enriched a hundredfold in sympathy, knowledge, and power; and though he is bidden to pour out its added wealth again and again upon the needy, yet each time it is returned with interest. "Give and it shall be given to you, good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over." God does not overlook the individual's rights; no more should we. Indeed, the very privilege of self-sacrifice for the race is a right that the spiritually evolving man is being taught more and more to claim for himself.

Having dealt with love as an integrating factor in the *individual* life, let us trace its operations in *social* life. Here too we find it knitting, relating, blending the hearts and minds and interests of separate and distinct personalities, in the same way as it gathers and binds into one the scattered parts of a single human character.

This is the peculiar quality of love, and the social unifications it seeks to effect are three-fold in their nature: that of the *hearts*, of the *minds*, and of the *external interests* of men. And love to be complete in its

working must have touched all these three sides.

The first and simplest of the social functions of love is that which leads men, through self-sacrifice, to a distribution of material goods, seeking to bring about a community (in various forms suitable to each age) of external advantages and wealth. This ideal of love many are seeking to realise.

Secondly, there is the integration in intellectual life. In this direction, too, many are at work—harmonisers and reconcilers—who are endeavouring to bring hostile views, opinions, and creeds into converging lines of thought, and are thus knitting together the *minds* of men.

But there is the third and last aspect of love's activity—the union of the *hearts* of men; and this is the least understood, the most neglected, and yet the highest and holiest of its social offices. Maybe, by reason of its very magnitude, and the corresponding greatness of its difficulties, it will be the last element in social unification to seriously engage the attention of men and

enlist their powers. At present it is largely relegated to the realm of sentimentality.

"Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." That refers to the *nature* and *quality* as well as to the degree of love.

The *measure* of a man's devotion to his brother is his readiness to lay down his life for him—meaning by "life" not only the physical existence, but also the intellectual and the spiritual. Love would make him willing to renounce, where the good of others required it, the culture and enjoyment of even the highest powers of his being.

But it is the *quality* of Godlike love that we need to realise. We shall discover it in the life of Jesus. He said, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself"—that, as we have already shown, refers to the quality of the love, as well as its degree and measure.

Perhaps in defining the nature of our love for ourselves we shall come to a clearer understanding of what should be the nature of our love for others. Its chief characteristic is that it is intensely *personal*. This personal element, beginning with ourselves, extends also to some of our nearest earthly relationships.

It generally forms a part of our affection for our own immediate family group, and, in a lessening degree, for our circle of closest friends. After that it dwindles away till it finally disappears; leaving, instead of a glowing *heart-love*, something far colder, more distant and impersonal—an attachment of the mind or reason or will.

“Thought is impersonal, feeling is personal,” and it is this impersonal intellectual relatedness that we fall back upon in our failure to realise the higher element in love—namely, the *personal* element—that which denotes the presence of the *heart* in any earthly attachment.

It is this heart-love that Christianity has made its *special* object of culture, and with references to which the New Testament Scriptures abound. St. Paul, taking the symbol of the human body to illustrate the nature of the love he had in view, urges that “all the members should have the same care one for another”—the same, that is, as they have for themselves—“and that whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member is honoured, all the

members rejoice with it." When we contrast such an ideal with our inability to extend a love at all approaching this beyond the very limited circle of nearest relations and friends, we realise how far short we come of the Christian standard. We should be able to feel and deal with the joys, sorrows, hopes, and disappointments of humanity as we would were they our own, to thrill as with a deep personal joy when a fellow creature reveals to us some new sweet gladness that has come to him, or to feel the pang that rends another's heart as if it were our own. With a heart open to humanity, drinking deeply into its spirit, we should be able to live in the lives of others as if they were our own, in the power of an ever-expanding and deepening love. Some one has said, and said truly, that "Nothing but the Infinite pity is sufficient for the infinite pathos of human life." But some of that compassion, at least, is meant to find its way into our hearts and an outlet through our lives in streams of glowing, melting, fusing love that shall knit heart to heart and life to life, and make the solidarity of humanity a living reality.

The aloofness and separatedness that mark our social intercourse, the inability to draw near to the human *heart* even in our charities and philanthropic efforts, or our religious activities, is significant of a great lack. This lack is every now and again emphasised when some one with a large and cultured *heart* steps into the busy arena of our life and touches the hearts of men with a personal touch. Immediately the wilderness, which arduous labour of head and hand had not been able to call into bloom, begins to blossom as the rose!

Heart-love, deep and strong and far-reaching, will be the wonder-working power of the world—the dynamic of life; and when it comes to our race, as the crowning attainment of human character, all else will follow in its train that we now feebly strive for. Meanwhile, however, this glorious illustration of St. Paul's has become a mere figure of speech with us; at the best, it has been used to represent an intellectual consent and external harmony and benevolence, which, however good, are far removed from the glowing personal sentiment he described.

We have become sceptical with regard to the existence of such a sentiment beyond the narrow limits of the family life, even though it stands clearly defined upon the sacred page of Scripture.

Reverently we turn to the great Master Himself for His teaching on this question, and we hear Him say, "A new commandment I give unto you; that ye love one another, even as I have loved you." A *new* commandment. Wherein consists the newness, for the command to love God and man has long stood in the Decalogue? Surely in this, that it is a love like His own newly-revealed love that He now enjoins upon His followers. "*Even as* I have loved you." How did He love them? Much might be said of this wondrous love of Christ that revealed and exemplified the love of the Father; but let us merely note two unique characteristics of it—namely, its peculiar *personalness* and its *universality*. It is the same familiar human affection that we know so well in our closest earthly ties—with this difference, that the personal element in it is not only immeasurably stronger and deeper, but

that it also extends to and embraces all humanity.

Mr. Carnegie Simpson says, "The love of Jesus for men was an enthusiasm. It was a heart's love He gave them, and its activities were pulsing with His heart's blood. . . . And again, Jesus, who made love ardent and universal, made it also the first and supreme law of life. . . . It was His life to love, and He had no other life than love. He was love."

Never, until we get a little nearer the combination of these two elements—the personal and the universal—in our loving, will we understand the character of Jesus or the love of God. In obeying the Master's command and aspiring after the unique personal quality of His love, no less than its breadth and greatness, will we find the key to a marvellous knowledge of God and man—for, we repeat, "to love is virtually to know."

Lastly—man's love to God. Volumes have been written dealing with the great subject, but let it suffice us to note but one aspect of it here.

We find that God requires the same quality of *personalness* in our relations with Him as He does in our relations with mankind ; and St. John tells us that it is not acquired Godward except by being exercised manward. "He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, cannot love God whom he hath not seen."

In these days Reason and Intellect are being directed Godward, and the Divine Being is becoming an increasing reality to men's minds ; what Phillips Brooks calls a "mind's love for God " is springing up everywhere. But the *heart*-element of devotion is still lacking ; and it is what God places first in His claims upon the affection of man's whole nature, saying, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, with all thy mind, and with all thy strength." He seeks to become to us, through Christ, a living Person round whom our heart-strings twine in the same familiar, tender, intimate way we know in our best earthly affections. He desires to be an ever-present, vivid reality, calling into play our deepest, richest feelings and highest activities.

He bids us love Him with all our heart in response to His personal love revealed in Jesus, which lifts each unit of the human race up into a personal relationship with Himself.

It is to the Religiously Inspired that it is given specially to emphasise this heart side of love to God and man. To work this out as an experience and a doctrine is the contribution they are destined to make to human evolution. To them has been granted a unique faith, which links them with the Divine and makes them an avenue for the inflow of God's love into their hearts. While others have to climb laboriously up to it, they may rise rapidly on wings of vision and inspiration. Therefore, on them devolves the duty of culturing that unique heart-love which is the peculiar revelation of Christianity. Out of their ranks will arise its prophets and teachers, who should evolve in the heart of humanity this innermost spirit of Divine love and make it a practical working power in the world—the greatest force in religious, moral, intellectual evolution.

Thus *spiritual* love—*heart-love*—which is the crown of Religious Genius—the highest summit that it can reach—opening wide the gate of heaven, will lead us up into the life of God.



